

The Books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

Lesson 7: Your King Comes, Humble and Riding on a Donkey -- Zechariah 9:1-17

Imagine you are standing in a crowd along a dusty road, and word spreads that a king is coming. You brace yourself for what kings always bring. You listen for the rumble of chariot wheels and the thunder of warhorses, the clang of armor, the tramp of soldiers who have come to take and not to give. That is what power has always looked like in this world. Kings come to be served, to collect, to conquer. So you steady your nerves and you wait for the show of force. And then, around the bend, comes a man. Not on a stallion. Not in a chariot. He is riding a donkey, a young one, a colt. And somehow the crowd does not laugh. They throw down their coats. They wave branches. They shout, because they know, in a way they can barely explain, that this is the King they have been waiting for all along.

Zechariah 9 opens nowhere near that gentle scene. It opens with the heavy tread of judgment. One by one the prophet names the proud cities that ringed God's people, Hadrach and Damascus, the wealthy harbor of Tyre that had heaped up silver like dust, Sidon, and the old Philistine strongholds of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod. These were the powers that had always loomed over little Judah, the empires and trading cities that seemed to hold all the cards. And God walks down the line of them and says, in effect, I see them, I rule them, and none of them is beyond my reach. Then He turns to His own people and makes a tender promise: 'I will encamp at my house as a guard' (9:8). The God who topples the proud nations stoops to pitch His tent around His own.

And right in the center of all this, the music changes. The drums of judgment fall silent, and a single clear note rings out: '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' (9:9). For centuries those words waited. And then one spring morning outside Jerusalem, Jesus sent two disciples for a donkey's colt, climbed onto its back, and rode into the city while the crowds spread their cloaks and cried 'Hosanna.' Matthew tells us plainly that it happened 'to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet' (Matthew 21:4). The King of Zechariah's vision had a name, and a face, and a cross waiting for Him at the end of the road.

So this is a lesson about the kind of King God actually sends, and it may not be the kind we would have chosen. We tend to want a King who comes in strength to fix our circumstances and crush our enemies. God sends a King who comes in humility to save His enemies by His own blood. This King cuts off the chariot and the war bow, not to leave us defenseless, but because

He rules by peace and not by violence, and His reign stretches 'from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth' (9:10). Read this chapter slowly and let it reshape what you are looking for. Then ask the question the whole passage is pressing on you: will you receive this humble, righteous, saving King as your King, and let Him reign?

Group Discussion: Zechariah pictures a King who comes 'humble and mounted on a donkey' rather than on a warhorse, and who 'cuts off the chariot' and the battle bow to 'speak peace to the nations' (9:9-10). Why do we so often expect God to come to us in power and impressiveness, and how does the humility of the King Jesus reshape what we think strength and victory really are?

Personal Reflection: The crowds welcomed Jesus as King on the day He rode in on the donkey, yet many of the same voices soon wanted a different kind of king. In what areas of your own life do you say 'Jesus is King' while quietly wishing He would rule the way you would prefer? Be specific about where you are still trying to set the terms.

Read Zechariah 9:1-17

Study Questions

1. The chapter opens with a string of judgment oracles against the surrounding nations, Hadrach, Damascus, Tyre, Sidon, and the Philistine cities (9:1-7), and yet 'the eyes of mankind and all the tribes of Israel are toward the Lord' (9:1). What does it reveal about God that He pronounces and executes judgment over the proud nations that towered over His people? What does this teach us about His sovereignty over all the kingdoms of the earth?
2. Tyre had grown rich and self-secure, heaping up 'silver like dust, and fine gold like the mud of the streets,' building herself a stronghold (9:3), yet the Lord says He will strip her power and cast her wealth into the sea (9:4). Where are you tempted to build your own 'stronghold' of security out of money, achievement, or reputation? What in this passage exposes how fragile such strongholds really are?
3. After the judgment on the nations, God promises concerning His own people, 'I will encamp at my house as a guard, so that none shall march to and fro; no oppressor shall again march over them' (9:8). What does this picture of God pitching His tent around His people reveal

about how He cares for and protects those who are His? How does this prepare us for the coming of the King in the next verse?

4. God commands His people to 'Rejoice greatly' and 'Shout aloud' because their King is coming (9:9). What is one circumstance in your life right now where you are tempted to despair or grim resignation instead of joy? How might fixing your eyes on the King who has already come change your inner posture this week?
5. The promised King is described as 'righteous and having salvation' and yet 'humble and mounted on a donkey' (9:9), and Matthew records Jesus deliberately fulfilling this on the day He rode into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-5). What does it teach us about God that the King He sends comes in humility rather than military might? Why does the world so consistently misread true greatness?
6. Jesus, the King, did not come to be served but to give His life, riding not a warhorse but a donkey's colt. Where in your own life do you measure success and significance by power, status, or control rather than by humble, self-giving service? Name one specific relationship or setting where the humility of this King needs to reshape how you act.
7. The King 'shall cut off the chariot... and the battle bow... 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' (9:10). What kind of kingdom is being described here, and how is it fulfilled in the reign of Christ over His church right now rather than in an earthly military empire or a future political restoration? How does this guard us from misunderstanding the nature of Christ's kingdom?

8. God says, 'Because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit' (9:11), pointing forward to the deliverance Christ would purchase by His blood. In what ways have you experienced, or do you still need to experience, the freedom Christ offers from the 'pit' of sin, guilt, or hopelessness? Where do you need to live more freely as one who has been set free?

9. Bring the heart of the chapter together: the King who comes 'humble and mounted on a donkey,' who is 'righteous and having salvation,' who 'speaks peace to the nations,' and who sets prisoners free 'because of the blood of my covenant' (9:9-11). What does this whole picture reveal about the kind of King God sends and the kind of salvation He brings? How does the humble, righteous, peace-bringing, blood-purchasing reign of Christ over His church both satisfy our deepest need and correct every false hope of an earthly, political, or merely powerful kingdom, and what does it mean to truly receive Him as King?

10. Zechariah closes by promising that God will save His people like a flock, calling them 'prisoners of hope' who will be restored 'double' (9:12, 16-17), and the chapter as a whole holds out the coming of the humble, saving King. Looking back across the entire passage, name one specific way the Lord is using this picture of Jesus the King to form you, and one concrete area where you will let Him reign more fully this week.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Matthew 21:1-11, Jesus fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy as He rides into Jerusalem on a donkey; John 12:12-16, the disciples understanding the triumphal entry only after Jesus was glorified; Philippians 2:5-11, the humble King who emptied Himself and was exalted to reign; Colossians 1:13-14, being transferred into the kingdom of God's beloved Son and redeemed by His blood; Daniel 2:44, the kingdom God sets up that shall never be destroyed.