

PostExilicProphets 21-09-09a

Good evening, this is Thursday, the 9th of September, 2021. And we continue our study in the book of Zechariah. We're at a very interesting point in the book.

It's the center, it is a hinge. We're going to go in a radical and entirely new direction, beginning with chapter nine. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and we will dive right in.

Father, we're grateful for this time of fellowship and nurturing our souls through the study of your word. We thank you for the fellowship that we enjoy. We thank you for the enthusiasm that we have as a group to grow in grace and in knowledge, to encourage one another and to look forward to the day when the Lord Jesus comes to gather us to himself and bring us into that eternal future that we seek to prepare ourselves for.

We pray that as we look at this part of your word, that the Holy Spirit will help it to be clear that we can understand what it means and what it says to us so that we can make use of it in the hours and days ahead. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. The book of Zechariah splits neatly into two halves.

Chapters one through eight are the first half. Chapters nine through 14 are the second half. And we're right at that dividing point.

There has been a lot of scholarly vexation about this last half that we're about to embark upon because it is so greatly different from what we have seen. There are no visions. There's no mention of Joshua or Zerubbabel or even Zechariah or any commentator angels or guide angels.

It is, these next few chapters are going to be labeled as burdens. It's the word of the Lord as a burden. It is a straight prophetic message.

It harks back to things that Amos has said and that so different is it from the beginning that there's just been all kinds of speculation. I'll read you a little bit of the differences. We did not have any burdens in the first eight chapters.

This next several pages is going to be burden of the word of the Lord. And it is the same expression here at the beginning of chapter nine. We're going to see it again at the beginning of chapter 12.

So, and it is also going to begin the book of Malachi which follows hard upon Zechariah. And we've had assurances and visions of the future up to this point. It is going to change radically to a time of war in this next chapter.

And so, because it is so different, they've done, guys have done statistical analysis like they did on the book or books of Isaiah to statistically analyze the vocabulary and the structure and so

on to see if somebody else wrote it. And this question came up all the way back in the 1600s. The first people started questioning whether maybe this had been amalgamated from other prophecies.

Did Zechariah write this much later at the end of his life? Did his successors or his pupils write it after he was gone? There are people who think that it belongs to Jeremiah, that it maybe came from the time of Jeremiah and fell off the book of Jeremiah and got tacked onto this book. You just can't believe the angst and the theories because the whole structure and texture changes so radically at this point. I just wanna give you that by way of background as we prepare to read the first part here, the first part of the burden of the word of the Lord here in chapter nine.

And note how different it is. And I will say this about that. So often when God changes tactics or when he changes the form of his message, the assumption by the commentators at large is, well, since consciously or unconsciously, they assume that this is a human production, some other human must have done it or it is the work of human hands and human minds that has been poorly stitched together.

Instead of assuming from the outset that this is the word of God and in the same way that God uses narrative, he uses parables, he uses direct didactic teaching sections, he uses parables, he uses metaphor and illustrations, he uses poetry. And when these things are juxtaposed, it is because God wants to get our attention. He wants to shake us loose.

That's why we saw in Matthew, the section we're currently covering there with the rich young ruler starts with the word behold. Behold, this young man came to Jesus and it's a new thing. Well, what we're going to discover rather than rehearsing all of the blind alleys and dead end streets that all of these people, and I'm telling you, there are people who have said that there is no more vexed question in Old Testament interpretation than what's going on in Zechariah 9 through 14.

It's as difficult as any Old Testament problem there is. So naturally we're going to rush in where angels fear to tread and where commentators fear to form a solid opinion, but rehearsing all of the different theories and what timeframe they can't figure out if Zechariah didn't write it, then when was it written? And theories range all the way from the days of Josiah and Hezekiah before the fall of the Southern kingdom, all the way through the captivity, down through the times of Ezekiel, down to the days when it was actually written in the early return from the exile, all the way down to after the times of Alexander the Great, because so much of what this next section deals with predicts some of what Alexander is going to do. And Alexander, of course, is yet future.

He's still about a hundred years in the future. And references to idolatry, and they say, well, there was no idolatry after the exile, so it must've been written before when there was still an idolatry problem. I'm just telling you, it's a real can of worms.

It's pea soup fog, trying to find any two commentators that can agree on what's going on here. Well, I don't think it's nearly as hard as they're making out. To me, it's like all the dead seas of ink that have been spilled over the Trinity, and how can God be three and be one at the same time? And my thought on that is God incorporated.

It's three separate and distinct individuals who act as an incorporated unity, and they are one. They are one in purpose. They are one in power.

They are one in design, in the same way that, I mean, if you can understand a marriage, and the Bible says before you get out of the first few chapters of Genesis that the two shall become one flesh, so two people become one entity. They're, you know, Mr. and Mrs. Ideally, act together. They've got a common goal and purpose and family and direction and so on.

They're two separate individuals, but they're one flesh. They're, you look at the church, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all. We are one in the Spirit.

We are one in the Lord. And that unity is something to strive for and to attempt to preserve. Well, the Trinity is the same.

The three separate individuals who have voluntarily organized themselves into the Father, Son, and Spirit in terms of hierarchy and the Father being the planner and architect, the Son being the one who executes it, and the Holy Spirit providing the power, the communications, and it's a division of responsibilities. The second person became flesh and dwelt among us. The first and third persons did not.

So clearly, God, as a unity, is comprised of three individuals. Well, in the same way, there are radical differences between the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit and the Father, even though they are a single God or Godhead. Well, in the same way, Zechariah has got a lot of different parts and pieces, but it's all one prophecy.

And we're going to see that there are links. Context is our friend. And when we remember that the book is a unity and we remember what we've already been told, we're going to see that this falls into place in a very happy fashion, even though there is a great stylistic change in the presentation beginning here.

Having said that, let's take a look at Zechariah 9. You remember that we had these little short words that ended chapter eight, these promises that God is going to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah, conditioned upon their treatment of each other, not loving false oaths, not thinking evil in their hearts against their neighbor. And the word of the Lord comes and says these feasts and fasts that you've been observing, where you mourn and sigh and cry over the past are going to be days of celebration. There will be joy and gladness in 8:19.

Cheerful feasts for the house of Judah. Therefore, looking ahead to the fulfillment of these promises, love, truth, and peace. Emeth and shalom.

Then the final one there, people will come inhabitants of many cities. Let us continue to go and pray before the Lord and seek the Lord of hosts. I myself will also go.

Many peoples and strong nations will come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to pray before the Lord. In those days, 10 men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man saying, let us go with you. We've heard that God is with you.

We have heard that Emmanuel, Emmanuel is not the Hebrew here, but it means the same thing. God is with you. Well, that is a reminder.

Do you recall that in the early parts of the Old Testament, you can go all the way back to Leviticus where there were promises of this multiplied people idea. 10 men are going to grab one Jew and say, we want to go with you because you're heading for God. But remember in Leviticus chapter 26, where the blessings that were promised, you will pursue your enemies and they will fall by the sword before you.

This is Leviticus 26, seven and following. You will pursue your enemies and they will fall by the sword before you. By the way, that's a promise of blessing that you're going to slay your enemies.

God talking to Israel. Five of you will pursue a hundred and a hundred of you will pursue 10,000 and your enemies will fall by the sword before you. There's this idea that one of you can handle 20, five of you can pursue a hundred, a hundred of you can pursue 10,000.

And you get the idea that if five of you can pursue a hundred then one of you, it's exponentially greater. So one of you could pursue 10, five of you can pursue a hundred and a hundred of you can pursue 10,000. The more the merrier, the power multiplies the more of you there are.

And there are similar passages just to mention a few. That was Leviticus 26, eight. In Deuteronomy 32, 30, the opposite case where when they're disobedient and God withdraws his provision and his grace and his power, one man will pursue a thousand of you and two will put 10,000 of you to flight because your rock has sold you out and the Lord has given you up.

I'm paraphrasing there. How could one man pursue a thousand or two put 10,000 to flight unless their rock had sold them, unless the Lord had given them up. It's just the opposite.

Without the Lord, one man can put a thousand Israelites to flight. We've got one individual in various offices you can think of in the government that can instill fear and change the actions in thousands of us out here in America, telling us where to go and what to wear and how far apart we can be and so on. What we ought to get shot with and what we ought to dose ourselves with and so on.

How could one man pursue a thousand or two put 10,000 to flight? This is a metaphor for fear. Fear. Joshua 23, verse 10.

One of you can put a thousand to flight because the Lord your God fights for you just as he promised. You think about Samson when he found a jawbone of a donkey and used it to strike down a whole eleph of Philistines. Remember that? By the way, here's a trivia question for you just in case you're starting to glaze over.

This is your pop quiz question. Who else slew multiple men, men, multiple Philistines all by himself? Like 600 of them with an ox goad. Most overlooked man.

You think about it. He picked up an ox goad and slew 600 bad guys. Now we don't even remember his name.

That's memorable. Shamgar, Shamgar. It's in the book of Judges along about chapter three or so.

I forget exactly where, but that is a feat. Maybe I'll just do a whole special on Shamgar one of these days, but talk about being overlooked for prizes. But so you get the idea, and this is kind of a theme in the Old Testament that gets reversed in the millennial kingdom, which is so many times nations would gather against Jerusalem coming down from the North.

We saw that previously coming down from the North, whether it's the Syrians, the Assyrians, Northern Israel coming down to attack Judah, the Babylonians later on. But there are two reasons why nations converge on Jerusalem. Most of the time in the Old Testament, when they're converging on Jerusalem, it's not a good thing.

Even the greatest, most famous battle of all time is going to be nations gathered in the Valley of Megiddo, in the shadow of Har-Megiddo to attack the Jews in Jerusalem, right? But that curse is reversed in the millennial kingdom. And now the nations, and this is what we're going to see in this latter half of Zechariah, the nations now are going to be clamoring to come to Jerusalem, not as a curse, but because there is blessing. They're going to bring their glory to Jerusalem.

They're going to bring their numbers to Jerusalem. 10 of them are going to grab one Jewish guy and say, can we come with you? Not to attack, not to destroy, not to plunder and pillage and enslave, but for blessing and to bask in the glory of God. So this is what's coming up.

So that's what we saw at the end of Zechariah chapter eight. Now let's read chapter nine. But you remember, just glance through, just flip back through the pages of the first eight chapters.

You remember the building of the temple is in view and its spiritual meaning, the visions and the promise that should provide hope and encouragement to the people. Be strong, be comforted. I'm not going to treat the remnant of this people as in former days.

Chapter eight, verse 11, the seed will be prosperous. And verse 12, the vine will give its fruit and so on. All of these visionary encouragements centered in Joshua, centered in Zerubbabel, centered in the presence of God amongst his people.

I will be with them. Emmanuel is the idea. Now look at chapter nine.

The burden of the word of the Lord against the land of Hadrach and Damascus, its resting place. For the eyes of men are, and all the tribes of Israel are on the Lord. Also Hamath borders on it and Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise.

For Tyre built herself a tower, heaped up silver like the dust and gold like the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out. He will destroy her power in the sea and she will be devoured by fire.

Ashkelon shall see it and fear. Gaza also shall be very sorrowful and Ekron, for he dried up her expectation. The king shall perish from Gaza and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.

A mixed race shall settle in Ashdod and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. I will take away the blood from his mouth and the abominations from between his teeth, but he who remains, even he shall be for our God and shall be like a leader in Judah and Ekron like a Jebusite. I will camp around my house because of the army, because of him who passes by and him who returns.

No more shall an oppressor pass through them, for now I have seen with my eyes." What on earth is going on? Would be tempting to just pass over those first eight verses and get to the good stuff in verse nine. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem.

Behold, your king is coming to you. He's just as salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey, et cetera. Little more smooth sailing there.

What on earth is going on here? First of all, this burden of the word of the Lord is against the land of Hadrach and Damascus, its resting place. This has been a conundrum because Hadrach is pretty much an unknown name until you dig into the inscriptions of Sennacherib and some of these kings of ancient times that have their list of conquests and military campaigns and so on. And Hadrach is mentioned in there.

And evidently back in the days of ancient Syria, there were states that were formed. And this would be like having Oregon and Washington and California and Idaho and so on. And the land of Hadrach was a region near Damascus.

It was known in the days of Zechariah. It was unknown just a few centuries later that the knowledge of it had kind of scrawled off. And by the time of Christ, people couldn't figure out what it was.

And when they were reading Zechariah, they thought, well, what is this? But it is a region and Damascus is sitting in its place. Now you can see, because we've been talking about Babylon, what's the capital city of the Babylonians? Babylon. What is Damascus the capital of? Yeah, so this is why they're saying, well, wait a minute.

I thought that was long gone. Why is Damascus even being mentioned now? Why are the Philistines being mentioned now? All of this Ashkelon and Ashdod and Gaza, that's all down in Philistia. And the prophecy here says that I will cut off the pride of the Philistines in verse six, who pretty much eliminated the Philistines and all of their mighty men.

This was back in the days of David, right? That's 600 years in the past. And yet this is presented as a future prophetic word. So it's just fraught.

It's fraught with unknowns and you cannot find, I promise you, search the world over and see if you can find, not true love, see if you can find two commentators that agree on this portion of Zechariah, I can't find any. But let's just take it in its context. First of all, what is the theme and overarching emphasis that we've seen in the first part of this book? Remember the eight visions.

There is hope centered in the King priest, pictured by both Joshua and Zerubbabel, who is going to bring deliverance and make possible the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. They are conditional promises, but there is hope and there are words of comfort. God knows, remember those eight visions? God knows what's going on.

He's got his horsemen sitting in the glade and they're aware that the nations are dwelling in peace. And there seems to be no threat to their power, but there's going to be artisans who are going to take those horns and grind them down to dust and so on. You remember that, right? Well, that's why accepting as a given the unity of a book like this is so important.

If you say, well, this is a tack on and I've got to start fresh at nine one, it's hopeless, but it's not hopeless. So the burden of the word of the Lord, a burden when you think about burdens, you think about the woes to the Pharisees, you think about the woe songs that we've seen in previous prophetic books and you think about Ezekiel and his burdens and some of the entities there are mentioned here, such as Tyre. You remember there is a burden against the King of Tyre in both Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28.

And it speaks of bigger things. Same thing here. As soon as you start seeing Damascus and Philistines, and these are things in the past, yet they're being prophesied for the future.

You know that you've got a unique divine proclamation here that requires some unpacking, requires some thought. So it's against the land of Hadrach and Damascus, it's resting place. You get the idea that this region is dominated by Damascus.

It's kind of like Judea being dominated by Jerusalem. But in the days of the old empire that's already come apart and gone to dust, there was this region and Damascus dominating it. It's resting place.

Now, this next part needs a little fixing. The eyes of men and all the tribes of Israel are on the Lord. That is not what it says in Hebrew.

This is one way of trying to take the genitive here. There are subjective genitives and objective genitives. And the genitive here is the word translated men, Adam.

People have changed this around and they said, no, it's Aram. It's going to be, it should be an R instead of a D. And it's not the, here's the simple solution. And believe me, I am cutting through miles of red tape of various interpretations here.

This is what I think based on context. And I'll explain it here in a moment. It's backwards because they took the genitive as subjective and it should be objective.

What this basically says is the eyes of the Lord are on men and all the tribes of Israel. So right in the margin. So where it says men, you can strike that out and say the eyes of the Lord are on men and all the tribes of Israel, men in general.

You see how there's kind of a parallel. There's the land of Hadrach, which is a region, and then specifically Damascus. The eyes of the Lord are on men in general and the tribes of Israel in particular.

This is, there's a parallelism here, but I'll give you the main clue for why this genitive has been misconstrued. This is, this section, verses one through eight, is chiasmic in structure. Our tried and true good friend, the chiasm.

So where would you expect to find the parallel to verse one in a section that comprises verses one through eight? Or comprised of, depending on how you'd like to use the word comprise. You'd find it in verse eight, right? So whose eyes are in use in verse eight? Capital M tells you these are the eyes of the Lord. I have seen with my eyes, says the Lord, right? What has he seen with his eyes? He has seen men in general and all the tribes of Israel in particular.

Most commentators are flipping a coin. A lot of them say the genitive should be taken the other way for various reasons. I didn't see any of them use the parallelism here, but it's pretty obvious to me.

The only eyes that are being used by anybody here are God's eyes in verse eight. So it makes sense that with this symmetrical structure, it is the eyes of the Lord they're in use in verse one. And it makes sense because these predictions are based on God's observation.

Now, where do I get that idea? What happened in our first eight visions? What was the first vision? The eyes of the Lord in the person of these reconnaissance teams are out there apprising him of what's going on amongst all the nations, right? And he is aware that this is a gross injustice because these nations have used their horns to gore and discipline and judge the people of God. God's eyes are on his people. God's eyes are on the nations that he used to judge and discipline them, right? Same thing here, but it's a different form.

We've switched modes of communication from vision form, horses in the glade, the observation and the horns and the rest of it, the squirrel flying through the house and the squirrel is the law

and that's gonna be judging God's people, right? Sorting out who's gonna be in the city that won't be measured with a measuring line. That's gonna be the law, who acknowledged sin and came to God in repentance and availed themselves of his grace. All of that was in those visions.

God's eyes are on the nations. God's eyes are on his people. God's eyes are on the righteous.

God makes provision for those who seek him. This is Joshua and Zerubbabel with government and priestly function, right? So the eyes of the Lord are on men and all the tribes of Israel. That's verse one.

And the reason the burden is coming against the land of Hadrach and Damascus, its resting place, Damascus is the horn. You got an animal, but horn doesn't do much good unless it's attached to an animal when you're talking about a horn that's gonna gore and push and cause damage, right? So the land of Hadrach with Damascus, its resting place. Remember the, what did the scouts report in the Glade? We've looked all around and the nations are at rest.

Damascus is at rest in the midst of Hadrach, which is put for all of these nations that have been against Israel. Some of them have been the horn. Others have been the support, have been the means for employing the horn and directing the horn and so on.

Also Hamath, which borders on it and against Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise, Tyre and Sidon. This is going to begin a litany of cities and the cities of the Philistines. And if you look at a map, we're coming down the coast.

Where is Tyre? Tyre is up there real close to Lebanon, close to Beirut in Lebanon. You come south, there's Tyre. Come a little further south, there's Sidon.

You keep coming down the coast and pretty soon you're going to get to Ashdod and Ashkelon and Gaza that are mentioned in verse five. So all of this is stuff that's on the West Coast. All of these cities.

And so if you want to sum up this West Coast border, go any further West and you're in the Mediterranean Sea, you just talk about the Philistines, right? Because historically these towns were founded by, inhabited by, and Israel was attacked from these Philistine strongholds. That's why the five cities of the Philistines, this is, and the giants, Goliath and his brethren were David's targets. Who overcame them? Who overcame the Philistines? Who defeated them? David.

Who is going to, in the future, defeat the land and its resting place, the nations and their horns? David's greater son, right? So you can see that by dipping into the past for imagery and symbolism, this prophecy deals with the future. And all of these things that are considered strongholds and impregnable fortresses and impossible enemies, even through the days of the judges, they can only hold off the Philistines for a little while. Samson does it for a little while.

Shamgar does it for a little while, but the Philistines keep coming back and keep coming back. It

takes David to end the Philistine threat. And David himself falls into the hands of the Philistines.

And they have to end up thinking that he's a nut one time for him to leave. Remember that? What did the Romans think of Jesus? Pilate thinks, well, you're kind of a religious nut. It was his own people that got him crucified.

The, you know, Pilate was ready to let him go. You're just a wacko. You know, I, you know, what is truth? Do you even know what you're talking about? And there are many parallels between the life of the Lord Jesus.

You remember him going back and forth across the Brook Kedron, just as David did in the times of Absalom and so on. Rejected by his own people and then returning in triumph. And this future promised King priest follows that pattern.

Joshua and Zerubbabel were the pattern in the first eight chapters, but now God harks all the way back to David and the days of the Philistines to make this point. So as we prepare to go to the break, what's our takeaway? What's our application from this? Number one, sometimes when God has been speaking to us and leading us and guiding us in one way, he will suddenly shuffle the deck. He will shift the strategy and hit us in a fresh way from a fresh perspective, from a previously unseen or unacknowledged source.

We need to be ready to listen when God changes tactics in communication with us, just as the original recipients and everyone since receiving this prophecy of Zachariah, when he shifts gears, instead of trying to figure out, well, somebody else must've written this. It's kind of like, well, who sinned, this man or his parents that he's blind. Wait a minute, are you looking at the Lord? Are you looking at the miracle? Are you, you know, the blind man, it has to explain to the Pharisees.

You know, it's pretty obvious to me that if this guy can heal congenital blindness, he's from God. I mean, how hard is this? But to miss the content by agonizing over the form, we don't want to do that. Many times we can get into a comfortable pattern and then suddenly God will shake it up.

You might hear a Bible teacher on YouTube or pick up a book or somebody might reference something. You might catch something on the radio or on the internet somewhere. And there's a different perspective.

There's a whole different approach, a different way of looking at things. God, the Holy Spirit will pick up and use anything and anybody to get through to us. And sometimes it requires a shift in tactics.

So that's point one. That's what happened here. These people became insensate.

God sent them Haggai and then sent them Zechariah and tried to get through this pattern. He said, you're acting like your fathers where you've got apathy. You're going through the

motions, but your heart is not in it.

I have to set you against each other. I have to create confusion and stop your efforts. I have to poke holes in the bag you're trying to bring your harvest home in because you're not getting the message.

And even here after these eight visions, you get the idea that Zechariah is only reaching a small remnant. So God says, all right, let me try a different approach. Let me see if you can solve this puzzle.

It's like Jesus speaking in parables. This is sort of a prophetic parable where we're going back to Damascus. We're going back to the Philistines.

We're going back to Ashdod and Ashkelon and Gaza and the days of David. The Philistines haven't been around for 600 plus years. And yet here we are talking about them.

Why? Hey, knock, knock, knock. I stand at the door and knock. Are you going to open the door? Let me in so I can manifest myself, reveal myself.

God is very ingenious and so inventive in the ways he seeks to communicate with us. So that's point one. Secondly, I would suggest that this is all about hope.

Commentators say, well, it's about warfare and destruction and all of these bad things that are going to happen. Wait till we get to verse six. A mixed race shall settle in Ashdod.

The word there is not mixed race. It's singular and it's only used one other time in the Bible. But the old King James translates it.

And you don't get to say this word in church very often, but the King James translates it. Bastard, a bastard will dwell in Ashdod. So we'll have to see what that's all about.

Why is there a bastard in Ashdod? But our second point is when God makes these promises, looking to the future and giving these promises in a time of great uncertainty, a time of turmoil, a time of failure on large portions of the people of God, the people are not responding properly. They've gone through the motions, but they're really not building God's temple. They are not becoming God's temple.

God's gonna have to get a whole new kind of people in, i.e. the church, to have a temple where he can dwell in the midst of his people. That's us and that's now. But we don't wanna miss the way these people missed the message of instruction and correction and rebuke.

The doctrine that is here is learn in the present to prepare for the future. Let our minds be transformed. Let our hearts be renewed.

Don't get caught up in the details of life. Don't get caught up in the current events and in the opinions of people and the prevailing view and the dominant poll numbers and what is

trending in social media and what most people think. Most people are wrong.

The majority is almost always wrong. God's people have always been a minority, Old Testament and new. So if a view is widespread and popular, it should be viewed with deep suspicion and we should go to the source of absolute truth and reflect on it, think about it, marinate in it, meditate on it and ask, seek and knock for understanding.

Ask, seek and knock for application. God is never going to reject that petition. Lord, please open the door for me.

Please help me find the truth that I need, the answers that I'm seeking so that I can live my life in a way that is pleasing in your sight and glorifying to the Lord Jesus. That prayer will always be answered and usually quickly. In my experience, when I finally realized that I haven't been doing that and I go before the Lord, confess that sin and then say, please lift the fog, help me to see what the proper priority, the proper goal, the proper values are.

Those answers come really fast. God is canvassing the earth, looking for those of us who will do that. Well, we'll see more of this when we come back from the break.