Zechariah 9:9-13

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

Wyn Laidig

June 2016

***Zechariah 9:9–13***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. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, 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. As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double. For I have bent Judah as my bow; I have made Ephraim its arrow. I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and wield you like a warrior’s sword.

1. Briefly summarize the message of the first part of this chapter, Zech 9:1-8.

YHWH will both punish and purify Israel’s enemies who have occupied the Promised Land. He will purify and then gather the remnant from ALL peoples (both Israel and the Gentiles who were former enemies of Israel) and dwell with them in the promised land, protecting them from future oppressors. God’s judgment and his punishment are His way of bringing people to know Him. His desire is for the enemies of Israel to be joined as one with Israel, and He is working for that purpose.

1. In Zech 9:9, the Hebrew is ambiguous. “daughter of Zion” and “daughter of Jerusalem” could also be translated as “daughter Zion” and daughter Jerusalem”. Why is the term “daughter” used? Who do these phrases refer to? Who is supposed to rejoice and shout?

“daughter of Zion” could refer to the “offspring of Zion”. In other words Zion is like the parent. OR it could be calling Zion (and her people) the daughter, in which case YHWH is like the parent, showing his caring for his people as a father would for her daughter.

“daughter Zion” would refer to Zion itself as a representation of her inhabitants.  
likewise with Jerusalem. Again, YHWH would be calling Zion his daughter.

Zion and Jerusalem are used here as poetic synonyms. The people of Zion (that is, the people of Jerusalem) should shout and rejoice, because their king is coming.

1. The prophet Zephaniah prophesied to Judah during the reign of King Josiah, about 100 years earlier, just before the exile to Babylon. Look at Zeph 3:14-17. What similarities do you notice in that message to the one from our passage in Zechariah?

***Zephaniah 3:14–17***Sing aloud, O **daughter of Zion**; shout, O Israel! **Rejoice and exult** with all your heart, O **daughter of Jerusalem**! YHWH has taken away the judgments against you; he has **cleared away your enemies**. **The King of Israel, YHWH, is in your midst**; you shall never again fear evil. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: “Fear not, O Zion; **let not your hands grow weak**. YHWH your God is in your midst, **a mighty one who will save**; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

Rejoice, daughter Zion, Rejoice daughter Jerusalem. Your King is coming, bringing salvation.

Zephaniah also says, “let not your hands grow weak” which is the same goal of Zechariah’s prophecy. Both prophets are showing glimpses of the end times, which are to be encouragements to the people, so that they will continue steadfast in their life and service to YHWH.

1. What are the qualities of this coming King, based on Zech 9:9? Which of these qualities would be expected of a king, and which would not? Why?

He will be righteous, bringing salvation, humble, & mounted on a young donkey.

A king would be expected to be righteous and bring salvation to his people. But he would not be expected to be humble and riding on a young donkey.

1. Would you expect a king bringing salvation to come on a horse or a donkey? Why?

A king would come to conquer the oppressors, riding on a horse, a war horse, not a donkey. It is humiliating to ride a donkey!

1. The word translated as “humble” is the Hebrew עָנִי **‘ani**. What does this word really mean? What does this tell you about the “coming King”?

Hebrew עָנִי **‘ani** “afflicted, humiliated, made lowly, poor”  
It is not the quality one would expect of a king. A king is not normally seen as lowly, poor, or someone humiliated or afflicted.

1. What do we know from other Scriptures about the coming king? For example, see 2 Sam 7:10-13, Ps 89:1-4, Is 9:6-7, Ezek 37:24-25, and Jer 23:5-6.

***2 Samuel 7:10–13***from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, YHWH declares to you that YHWH will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and **I will establish his kingdom**. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of **his kingdom forever**.

***Psalm 89:1–4***I will sing of the steadfast love of YHWH, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations. For I said, “Steadfast love will be built up forever; in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness.” You have said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to **David my servant**: ‘I will **establish your offspring forever,** and **build your throne for all generations**.’

***Isaiah 9:6–7***For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there **will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom,** to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the **YHWH Tsava’ot** will do this.

***Ezekiel 37:24–25***“My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children’s children **shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever.**

***Jeremiah 23:5–6***“Behold, the days are coming, declares YHWH, when I will raise up for David a **righteous Branch,** and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days **Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely**. And this is the name by which he will be called: **YHWH Tsidkenu** (YHWH is our righteousness).

1. Kings had to be in the line of David. Therefore this coming King, must be the offspring of David as well.

2. He will be righteous. His is referred to as “a righteous Branch” and shall be called “YHWH is our righteousness”, **YHWH Tsidkenu**.

3. The Coming King was clearly referring to the Messiah.

1. Look at Matt 21:1-11 and John 12:12-19. Why do you think Yeshua asked for a donkey to ride into Jerusalem?

***Matthew 21:1–11***Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, “Say to the daughter of Zion, **‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.**’ ” The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”

***John 12:12–19***The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, “**Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”** His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

After walking miles, when he was at the border of the city, about 3000 feet from the city gate, Yeshua asked for a donkey to ride the remaining feet. It wasn’t because he was tired. He was making a clear statement: “I am the coming King. I am the Messiah.”

1. If we only had the Hebrew scriptures to read, this passage about the coming King would be confusing, since it seems to send mixed signals about the nature of the King. But after reading Matt 21:1-11 and John 12:12-19, what do you conclude?

Messiah was indeed all that he was prophesied to be. He was righteous, bringing salvation, and humble (afflicted; made lowly) all at the same time. And the sign placed above the cross said “King of the Jews”.

However he didn’t complete the process of bringing punishment to Israel’s enemies, and purifying the remnant for his bride. And we know from other Scriptures that he will return again, and that he will complete final judgment and restoration at that time.

1. Compare Zech 9:10 to the prophesies of Hosea 1:7, Micah 5:10 and Hag 2:22. What is the message of Zech 9:10?

***Hosea 1:7***But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by YHWH their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen.”

***Micah 5:10***And in that day, declares YHWH, I will cut off your horses from among you and will destroy your chariots;

***Haggai 2:22***I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother.

The tools of war will be no more. No more chariots, war horses, or battle bows. It is not clear if these are the tools of war possessed by Israel, or the tools of war possessed by their enemies. Perhaps both. Either way, the result is the same. No more war.

He will bring peace and salvation – but that will come through means of war.

1. Where will the Coming King rule? There seem to be two layers of meaning (one more narrowly defining, and the other much more extensive in scope) in the phrases “from sea to sea” and “the river to the ends of the earth.” What river is “the River” (see Dt 11:24 and Josh 1:4, for example)? Compare to Ex 23:31. What would the more narrowly defined territory refer to? Then compare to Psalm 72:8-11. What would the extensive scope refer to?

***Deuteronomy 11:24***Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours. Your territory shall be from the wilderness to the Lebanon and from **the River, the river Euphrates**, to the western sea.

***Joshua 1:4***From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as **the great river, the river Euphrates,** all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory.

***Exodus 23:31***And I will set your border from the **Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines**, and from the wilderness to **the Euphrates**, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you.

***Psalm 72:8–12***May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from **the River to the ends of the earth**! May desert tribes bow down before him, and his enemies lick the dust! May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts! **May all kings fall down before him**, all nations serve him! For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper.

“The river” (or “the great river”) generally refers to the Euphrates.

Narrowly speaking, the passage refers to the Coming King ruling over the promised land, between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, and from the Euphrates River to the desert wilderness.

More broadly, as in Psalm 72, this speaks of the Coming Rule ruling over ALL nations, from the Source (Euphrates River) to the very ends of the earth. From one sea to the other… in other words from east to west, from one end to the other.

1. What is the clue in Zech 9:10 that we need to interpret these boundaries in the most broad sense?

He shall speak peace to “the ends of the earth” and to “ALL the nations”. This isn’t just about peace in the promised land, or from Israel’s immediate neighbors. It will be worldwide.

1. What is meant by the phrase “blood of my covenant” in Zech 9:11? Consider Gen 15:5-10, 18 as well as Exod 24:7-8 and Matt 26:27-29.

***Genesis 15:5–10, 18***And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” And he believed YHWH, and he counted it to him as righteousness. And he said to him, “I am YHWH who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” But he said, “Adonai YHWH, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half...On that day YHWH made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,

***Exodus 24:7–8***Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that YHWH has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.” And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that YHWH has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

***Matthew 26:27–29***And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

YHWH’s covenant with his people started with Abraham in Gen 15. It was further specified with Moses and descendants of Abraham in Ex 24. And it was renewed in a new covenant initiated by the blood of the Messiah, Son of YHWH.

Covenants required blood. The blood symbolically meant that the one that who breaks the covenant would be required to shed his blood (in death) as payment for breaking it. So this verse says that because of the blood of the covenant, the prisoners would be set free. Messiah’s blood was the ultimate payment for our breaking the covenant. As a result of that blood of the covenant, the prisoners (those doomed to death for breaking the Torah) would be set free.

1. YHWH says he will set the prisoners free from the waterless pit. See Dt. 27:26, Is 42:7 and Is 61:1. Who are the prisoners he is referring to? And why are they prisoners?

***Deuteronomy 27:26***‘Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

***Isaiah 42:7***to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

***Isaiah 61:1***The Spirit of Adonai YHWH is upon me, because YHWH has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

Prisoners are in prison because they have broken the law. In this case, God’s Torah. All people are doomed to death for we all break his Torah. What can free of this? Only the blood of the covenant, realized ultimately in the Messiah’s sacrifice.

1. Look at Gal 3:10-13 where Paul talks about the “curse of the Torah”. This passage is often misunderstood in traditional Christianity. In light of our study relating to Zech 9:11, Dt 27:26, Is 42:7 and Is 61:1, how are we to understand Paul? What is the “curse of Torah”? Is this implying that we should no longer keep the commands of God’s Torah?

***Galatians 3:10–13***For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—

The curse of Torah is the condemnation that comes from our breaking Torah. That is what makes us all prisoners, doomed to death. The Coming King, the Messiah, brings Salvation and through the blood of the covenant (His blood) set free the prisoners under the curse of the Torah.

1. The “waterless pit” is literally “the cistern without water”. Why is this used as a picture of our prison? Look at Ps 63:1, Is 44:3, Jer 2:13, Jer 17:13, John 4:10, John 7:37-39, Rev 7:17.

***Psalm 63:1***O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

***Isaiah 44:3***For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.

***Jeremiah 2:13***for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

***Jeremiah 17:13***YHWH, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be put to shame; those who turn away from you shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken YHWH, the fountain of living water.

***John 4:10***Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”

***John 7:37–39***On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ” Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

***Revelation 7:17***For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

To be in a cistern without water is to be apart from the Holy Spirit. To be thirsty for the source of Living Water, but to have no access to it. Why? Because we are not worthy. We have sinned. We have broken Torah and are under the curse of Torah. What can save us? Only the blood of the covenant to be shed in our place by the Messiah. He gives Living Water to those who thirst, to those in prison in a waterless cistern.

1. Consider the phrase “Return to your stronghold” in Zech 9:12. What is a stronghold? Why are the “prisoners” told to leave their dry cistern and return to their stronghold? What does the stronghold represent? Look at Ps 18:2, Ps 144:2, Nahum 1:7, Jer 16:19. Also compare to Zech 1:3.

***Psalm 18:2***YHWH is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

***Psalm 144:2***He is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.

***Nahum 1:7***YHWH is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him.

***Jeremiah 16:19***YHWH, my strength and my stronghold, my refuge in the day of trouble, to you shall the nations come from the ends of the earth and say: “Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, worthless things in which there is no profit.

A stronghold is a fortress or a place of refuge. The prisoners are living a life void of the presence of God and his Holy Spirit. They are in the cistern, and God is wanting them to recognize the worthless things they are living for and return to Him. YHWH is their stronghold.

Some suggest that Jerusalem is the stronghold referred to here. That could be as well, although Zechariah’s original audience was already living in Jerusalem so it wouldn’t make much sense to encourage to return to Jerusalem when there were already there. Nevertheless, YHWH’s presence will return to Jerusalem where he will dwell again with his people. So returning to Jerusalem could be seen as synonymous to (or symbolic of) returning to YHWH. The prisoners are living in a dry cistern now (absent from the presence of YHWH. They are urged to return to their stronghold (be it YHWH himself, or the place where He dwells) and again live in His presence.

***Zechariah 1:3***Therefore say to them, Thus declares YHWH Tsava’ot. **Return to me**, says YHWH Tsava’ot, and I will return to you, says YHWH Tsava’ot .

Return to your Stronghold is the same message that is really Zechariah’s theme stated at the beginning in Zech 1:3. “Return to me, and I will return to you.” He is the Stronghold.

1. What does the phrase “prisoners of hope” mean? Remember this is poetic language.

Linguistically this is ambiguous. It could be understood that Hope is imprisoning them, but that doesn’t make much sense in the context. It could also be understood that the prisoners are prisoners of hope in the sense that **they have hope**, which seems to be case here. So it would be more clear if this were translated “prisoners **with** hope”. These people may be in prison, but the good news is that they still **have hope**. Salvation will come to them if they return to their Stronghold.

1. The word translated “restore” is a form of the verb שׁוּב **shuv** “turn, return”. Note that in the prior phrase “return to your stronghold” the Hebrew for the word “return” is also a form of the verb שׁוּב **shuv** “turn, return”. This is the same word often translated as “repent”, but the main meaning is “turn, return”. What is the message of this poetic verse of Zech 10:12? Also consider Job 42:10 and Is 61:7, as well as Zech 1:3 which we just looked at in a prior question.

***Job 42:10***And YHWH **restored** the fortunes of Job, **when he had prayed** for his friends. And YHWH gave Job **twice as much** as he had before.

***Isaiah 61:7*Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion**; instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot; therefore in their land they shall **possess a double portion**; they shall have everlasting joy.

***Zechariah 1:3***Therefore say to them, Thus declares YHWH Tsava’ot. **Return to me**, says YHWH Tsava’ot, and I will return to you, says YHWH Tsava’ot .

YHWH is saying, if you return to me, your Stronghold, that is, if you repent, I will return to you a double blessing to you. Repentance means “turning”. Turning away from your path and onto God’s path. It is not just saying I’m sorry. It is a change of direction in one’s life.

It is interesting that this is almost the exact same message as in Zech 1:3. “Return to me and I will return to you.” Now we have, “Return to your Stronghold, and I will return to you with a DOUBLE blessing”. We are given a bit information this time. YHWH is pictured as our Stronghold (emphasizing the protection and provision he provides us) and we told that his return to us will be a double blessing.

1. What does it mean in Zech 9:13a when he says, “I have made Judah as my bow; I have made Ephraim its arrow?” Why does he include both Judah and Ephraim in this way?

Judah and Ephraim were two divided kingdoms. Both were conquered and scattered. But they will be reunited in the future, according to Scripture. Here YHWH is saying that he will use them both together, as a bow and arrow. Either one alone would be insufficient for the task.

1. YHWH is going to “stir up the sons of Zion” against Greece. When was Zechariah written? When was Greece a kingdom? When was this prophecy fulfilled (at least in part)?

Zechariah was written in about 510 BC. Greece became an empire under Alexander the Great in 323 BC. The people of Israel won their freedom by overcoming the Greek descendants (the Seleucids) in the Maccabee Revolt of 167 BC.

1. As often with prophesy, there can be a partial fulfillment with limited scope to be followed at a later date with complete fulfillment of a much broader scope. Compare Zech 9:13 to Is 66:18-19 where the same word for Greece (Javan) is used in a general sense to refer to coastlands far away. What are the hints in these passages that the complete fulfillment has yet to take place? When will the complete fulfillment of these prophesies to take place?

***Isaiah 66:18–19***“For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather **all nations** and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and **Javan, to the coastlands far away,** that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations.

In Isaiah: “ALL nations and tongues will be gathered together… from the coastlands far away (Greece).

In Zechariah: “His rule shall be from sea to sea, from the river to the ends of the earth.” This has not yet happened. He has not yet eliminated war and brought peace to the nations.

1. What is the main point of the passage?

The Messiah is coming as King – righteous, but lowly and humble, not bringing war but peace. With his blood of the covenant he will bring salvation to those living apart from YHWH. There is hope for the lost... if they return to YHWH they will be doubly blessed. God will use his people as his tool for bringing justice and peace to the nations. All for the purpose of bringing both Jew and Gentile into a covenant relationship with YHWH -- as in Zech 9:7, the Gentile nations “shall be a remnant for our God” and “shall be like a clan in Judah”.

1. What do you personally take away from your study of this passage?

I sometimes live my life as a dry cistern, without the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. The Father urges me to return to Him, my fortress and my strength, and dwell in His presence. He promises a double blessing to us as we return to him.