

"Zechariah's First Burden"

Part 5

Zechariah 9-11

Introduction: A little while back we started into Zechariah chapter 9 when we started to look at the first burden given to Zechariah. In the first 8 verses he wrote concerning the conquests of Alexander the Great and the protection of God over Jerusalem. Then in Zechariah 9:9 he wrote of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Had the Jews accepted Him as their King they could have had the Kingdom but they didn't. They were looking for political peace and Jesus came offering spiritual peace so they rejected Him.

John 12:12-15

¹² *On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,*

¹³ *Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

¹⁴ *And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,*

¹⁵ *Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.*

These verses make it appear as though they had accepted Jesus as their King. But it would only be a short time later when they spoke different words.

John 19:14-16

¹⁴ *And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!*

¹⁵ *But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.*

¹⁶ *Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.*

They rejected Him and the Kingdom was then postponed.

Notice Zechariah 9:9-10

Verse 9 deals with Jesus first coming and verse 10 deals with His second coming. We are living in the gap between these two verses. Verse 10 looks ahead to the Kingdom.

Notice Zechariah 9:11-12

Here we were reminded of God's faithfulness to the Abrahamic Covenant. Because of God's Covenant promises He could not allow the Jews to remain in captivity.

Return #1 - This is found in Ezra, 1, through 6, fifty thousand of them came back to rebuild the temple. The book of Zechariah is taking place in that first return.

Return #2 - This is found in Ezra, 7, through 10. Two thousand Jews are going to come back to decorate the temple and reform the people.

Return #3 - This is the return found in Nehemiah when Nehemiah and the Jews returned to rebuild the walls around the city.

So, when Zechariah writes this letter only the first return has happened. The second and the third return are yet to take place. So, there were still many Jews in Babylon.

Now as we come to verses 13-17, we are going ahead to around 167 BC. Here in these verses, we again see the faithfulness of God as He delivers the Jews from the terrible rule of Antiochus Epiphanes.

I. Background

a. The Rise of Antiochus Epiphanes

Alexander the Great died in his early 30's and after his death his kingdom fell into 15 years of fighting and chaos as his generals tried to step into his shoes. The kingdom ended up being divided. Eventually a mad man by the name of Antiochus Epiphanes came into power. The Jews under his rule suffered a hell on earth. It was his desire to Hellenize Jerusalem which means he wanted to do away with Judaism completely and introduce all Greek practices. In the midst of this the Jews were divided. Some wanted to hold tightly to Judaism and others pushed for reform to leave Judaism and go the way of the world. Antiochus favored the liberal Jews and in return they supported him.

As Antiochus organized his kingdom, he decided to conquer Egypt and he did so. Daniel tells us about this event.

Daniel 11:25-28

²⁵ And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him.

²⁶ *Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain.*

²⁷ *And both of these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.*

²⁸ *Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land.*

Antiochus then returned to his land and in so doing took out his frustrations on the Jews. He set his heart against the entire Mosaic Law (the holy covenant) and he then desecrated the temple.

Two years later he moved against Egypt again but was humiliated.

Daniel 11:29-30

²⁹ *At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter.*

³⁰ *For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.*

The Romans who had come to Egypt in ships withstood him. He was told to stand down and he wanted time to decide but a Roman general took a walking stick and drew a circle in the dirt around him and said he wanted a decision before he stepped out of the circle. To rebel was to declare war on Rome so he submitted. This was in 168 BC. He was then forced to return to his homeland. Again, he turned on the Jews out of frustration.

Daniel 11:31-32

³¹ *And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.*

³² *And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.*

Listen to some historical accounts:

In 168 BC Antiochus unleashed his fury on Jerusalem and he pillaged the city and took the women and the children captive and he slaughtered many Jews. Listen to the words of Josephus:

"Now Antiochus was not satisfied either with his unexpected taking the city (Jerusalem), or with its pillage, or with the great slaughter he had made there; but being overcome with his violent passions, and remembering what he had suffered during the siege, he compelled the Jews to dissolve the laws of their country, and to keep their infants uncircumcised, and to sacrifice swine's flesh upon the altar; against which they all opposed themselves, and the most approved among them were put to death."

Listen to what is recorded in the book of 1 Maccabees:

"Antiochus banned many traditional Jewish and Samaritan religious practices: he made possession of the Torah a capital offense and burned the copies he could find; sabbaths and feasts were banned; circumcision was outlawed, and mothers who circumcised their babies were killed along with their families; and traditional Jewish ritual sacrifice was forbidden. It was said that an idol of Olympian Zeus was placed on the altar of the Temple and that Israelites set up altars to Greek gods and sacrificed "unclean" animals on them."

2. The Revolt

Many of the Jews would rebel but they would pay a great price.

Daniel 11:33-35

³³ *And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.*

³⁴ *Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.*

³⁵ *And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.*

They would suffer for a time appointed and then the suffering would end. That is where our text in Zechariah comes in.

Notice Zechariah 9:13

Listen again to what is recorded in 1 Maccabees:

"In the narrative of I Maccabees, after Antiochus issued his decrees forbidding Jewish religious practice, a rural Jewish priest Mattathias sparked the revolt against

the Seleucid Empire by refusing to worship the Greek gods. Mattathias killed a Hellenistic Jew who stepped forward to offer a sacrifice to an idol in Mattathias' place. He and his five sons fled to the wilderness of Judah. After Mattathias' death about one year later in 166 BCE, his son Judah Maccabee led an army of Jewish dissidents to victory over the Seleucid dynasty in guerrilla warfare, which at first was directed against Hellenizing Jews, of whom there were many. The Maccabees destroyed pagan altars in the villages, circumcised boys and forced Jews into outlawry.

The revolt involved many battles, in which the Maccabean forces gained notoriety among the Seleucid army for their use of guerrilla tactics. After the victory, the Maccabees entered Jerusalem in triumph and ritually cleansed the Temple, reestablishing traditional Jewish worship there and installing Jonathan Maccabee as high priest. A large Seleucid army was sent to quash the revolt, but returned to Syria on the death of Antiochus IV. Its commander Lysias, preoccupied with internal Seleucid affairs, agreed to a political compromise that restored religious freedom.

The Jewish festival of Hanukkah celebrates the re-dedication of the Temple following Judah Maccabee's victory over the Seleucids. According to rabbinic tradition, the victorious Maccabees could only find a small jug of oil that had remained uncontaminated by virtue of a seal, and although it only contained enough oil to sustain the Menorah for one day, it miraculously lasted for eight days, by which time further oil could be procured."

II. The Power of God

Notice Zechariah 9:13-17

This victory of the Jews to retake Jerusalem was only by the power of God.

Antiochus had just demonstrated his might to the world at Daphne, with a grand review of his army: 46,000 foot soldiers were on parade, among them a Macedonian police force of 20,000 men and 500 hired soldiers equipped with Roman arms, followed by 8,500 horsemen and 306 armored elephants.

There are two points we need to see in what Zechariah records.

1. The zeal of the Jews to stand for God.

We are told here in Zechariah that God stirred them up but they still had to take a stand against this attack upon what God had established.

Application:

This same zeal is so much needed today which was seen back then. There is an attack upon the True Doctrines of the Word of God today and it is the responsibility of the church to stand and proclaim the Truth.

Please allow me to refresh your mind from the parables we have been looking at in Matthew 13.

Matthew 13:31-32

³¹ *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:*

³² *Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*

Here Jesus spoke of how Christendom will change its identity to be appealing to Satan and his demons. Our responsibility is to stand for the Truth so that this does not happen. It is for us to be sure that the world does not get in and dictate how the service is to be conducted and what is to be taught. The gathering together of the saints is to be a time when the Word of God is taught and learned.

Notice another parable.

Matthew 13:33

³³ *Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

Leaven always is symbolic of evil in the Bible and the Bread dough here would represent the Doctrines of Jesus Christ. The warning is that as time goes on the Doctrines will be polluted with false teaching. This is why it is so very important that we KNOW the Bible. This takes time and discipline but it is so necessary for all of us and especially for those who are raising a family. Your children are under attack today and you need to know the Truth to teach them and keep them on the right path.

These are two reasons for the need for zeal.

2. God's power to deliver.

Humanly speaking the Jews should have never won this victory, but God gave them the victory. They actually had little or no power on their own to defeat the Seleucids.

Application:

In this there is a picture of what God can do through any believer to deliver them from a stronghold.

Romans 6:3-7

³ *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

⁴ *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

⁵ *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*

⁶ *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

⁷ *For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

Our sin nature has been stripped of his power and now there is within us the very power that raised Jesus from the dead.

Ephesians 3:20

²⁰ *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,*

Conclusion:

It is this power of God that frees us from strongholds and addictions. It happens when we surrender ourselves over to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to live the life of Jesus Christ in and through us. So, if there is a stronghold that you are battling with understand that you can only gain victory through the power of God. In your flesh you have no power.