

Zechariah 9

Walton 24.12.06

In Zechariah ch. 9, there are several prophecies of dual fulfillment, indeed some may have a triple application.

The first eight verses show the destruction of the Persian empire and its replacement by the Greek empire under Alexander the Great – depicted in Nebuchadnezzar's image of Dan. ch. 2 by the bronze metal. Alexander the Great was perhaps the world's greatest military leader, who, at the age of 21, led the Macedonian army of 42,000 men, destroying the Persian empire and extending his rulerhip from the Indian Punjab and across into Egypt, all conquered within 12 years – a fantastic feat, covering thousands of miles on foot and horseback. He was a terrifyingly pitiless brute. Why did God allow such a man to conquer most of the then known world?

It was God's retribution upon those nations for the way in which they had treated His people. In spite of all Israel's failings, He cared for them because He had chosen them to be His people. Even centuries before Alexander's birth God had described the nature of this brazen-coated Greek empire – depicted as a leopard in Daniel 7. The leopard is noted for its speed and the unexpectedness of its attack and its tremendous brutal strength and cunningness. Right from the beginning God had an unchangeable purpose with Israel, and ultimately everything works out according to His pre-determined purpose, in spite of human failures.

It is the same with us; like Israel, we may fail at times, but God also has an unchangeable purpose with us. Let us look at Ephesians ch. 1 v 5. Eph. Ch. 1 from v. 5 (-8 and v 11):

"...God predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding" V. 11: "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will."

We cannot fully comprehend God's condescending love to us. Life, at times has its difficulties, but they make up our probationary training for His ultimate purpose, but nothing can happen to us outside of His control; He will preserve us because He wants us to be part of His purpose.

As Alexander swept through Syria he came to Tyre and there encountered considerable resistance, and those on mainland Tyre fled to the well-fortified island off the coast which had 150ft high fortifications all round. Their audacity infuriated Alexander and he set about totally destroying the city, pulling down its buildings and casting them into the sea to make a causeway to the island. Just as Ezekiel, by Divine inspiration, had foretold. He wrote of Tyre, "They will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea...You will never be rebuilt" (Eze. 26:12-13).

In 1961 I was privileged to visit the ancient site of Tyre. The modern city is near-by, and as we stood on the site we could see the colonades and stones still in the sea – from 2,300 years ago. Most of the ancient cities have parts restored, but not this one. There was a heap of a timber sections and the guide told us someone had tried to build a refreshment kiosk there, but the government stopped it, as this site was not to be built upon but remain in its demolished state. How incredible this is. God said it was not to be rebuilt and it hasn't been. How certain is every word of God! And it is this God who wants us and cares for us as a hen does her chicks

Let us look at Zech. Ch. 9 v 8 and see a verse partly fulfilled, but with a yet greater fulfillment. Zech. 9 v 8: "But I will defend my house against marauding forces. Never again will an oppressor overrun my people, for now I am keeping watch".

Certainly the latter part of the verse is still future. I rather like the R.V. rendering, "...and I (God) will encamp about mine house (the temple) because of the army."

Having destroyed Tyre and killed all its inhabitants, Alexander demanded the surrender of Jerusalem and they refused, so Alexander set his troops in order and rode on his steed towards the city with the intention of utterly destroying it. Would God encamp around Jerusalem and preserve them against such an overwhelming force? Would they dare to trust in God? The High Priest Jaddus, fully clothed in his priestly robes and followed by the priests, went to meet Alexander coming towards them on his steed. The two groups get closer and closer. Instead of killing them, Alexander dismounted and did obeisance to the High Priest. They explained to Alexander that Daniel had prophesied that the Greeks were to conquer Persia.

What made Alexander change his mind and instead of killing them, well-treated them? When his officers put this to him he explained that in Macedonia he had seen a vision of such a priest who had told him he would conquer the Persian empire. This is no fairy story, but a recorded, historical fact.

Now the great lesson from this fact is that God's angels encamp round about us and will also deliver us from evil. We are told in the Psalms, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and deleivereth them" (34:7). It took courage and implicit faith in God to go out to Alexander, and we, too, have to have a humble faith in God's ultimate deliverance.

Let us now read in Zechariah ch. 9 about Jesus riding into Jerusalem, which, as we know, has had its partial fulfillment.

Verse 9 of ch. 9: "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

There is great excitement because the people had been released from their difficulties and the Saviour had come. It affects two groups: the daughters of Zion and the daughter of Jerusalem.

The daughters of Zion are the saints. Listen to this verse from Ps. 87 v 5, "Indeed of Zion it will be said, This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High Himself will establish her". Paul uses this in Galatians to refer to those God has called out, saying, "Jerusalem, that is above, is free and she is our mother. This is referring to the saints who constitute the heavenly Jerusalem – we have been called, established by God to be daughters of Zion. Zion sometimes stands for God's temple, and we are privileged constituent parts of God's temple. When Sennacherib was going to destroy Zion, Isaiah refers to "The virgin daughter of Zion" (Is37v22) The virgin daughter is symbolic of weakness and vulnerability in the presence of a mighty foe, But the God of Zion delivered his virgin daughter and 185,000 died. We are also likened to virgins and he is mighty to protect us as his bride.

The daughter of Jerusalem refers to natural Israel. It is these two groups that are to welcome Jesus as their King. Matthew (21:5) quotes this and applies it to Jesus; he wrote, "Say to the daughter of Zion, See, your King comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey". The character of the King is that he is "righteous and having salvation". We ourselves are not righteous all the time, but Jesus was because he never sinned. Jesus was the only truly righteous

man – that had salvation. Those two words have a profound significance. Some translations have a marginal reference, changing “having salvation” to “saving himself” which I think gives a much deeper meaning. Jesus had sin’s flesh, he had lust like us, but it never conceived in him bringing forth sin – he never sinned.

Let us turn to some well-known words in John ch. 10 where Jesus tells of the requirement for our salvation, John ch10 v 11: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” So Jesus was to die, to voluntarily lay down his life so that we, his sheep, might live. And further on in the same chapter (vs.s 17-18) we read: “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own account. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

In effect it seems that God told Jesus, If you live a sinless life and lay your life down as a sacrifice in the way I have told you – of your own accord as a voluntary sacrifice - you will rise again from the dead as an immortal being and will be able to impart that new life to others who have died to the flesh.

You will recall it says in Hebrews (1v12), “He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, but he entered the Most Holy place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption”. He obtained “eternal redemption” for himself and in due course for others. Paul says in Romans (4:25), “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification”.

What does this mean? Well, you know that when you type on a computer the lines are of uneven length and in order to get them in a straight line you just press the ‘justification’ key and in a flash they are all straight and equal – or ‘justified’. And this is something like ourselves; incidents in our lives are recorded in the book of life and are uneven, but at the command of the Master they are straightened up = or ‘justified’ – all by God’s grace.

Back to our verse in Zech. Ch. 9. King Jesus is gentle and rides on a donkey. We are told in Philippians that Jesus, “being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (2:5-8). We see how Jesus was so kind, gentle and humble and we have to follow his example –encapsulated in Micah’s words (6 v 8), “What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?”

We even see Jesus’ humility in riding on a donkey. Most people would have had a donkey; they are easy to keep and were used a lot on the land and for travel – the poor man’s friend. Dignitaries like Alexander would have ridden on a horse – a symbol of man’s nobility and power. Under the law the firstborn of every animal had to be given to the Lord – with one exception: a young ass could be redeemed by the sacrifice of a lamb. I think the ass is really a symbol of national Israel – the other animals, representing the nations, could not be redeemed. The donkey was an unclean animal, but could be redeemed by the sacrifice of a lamb. It was Jesus, the lamb of God, that redeemed Israel. And we unclean Gentiles are redeemed by the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

Donkeys can be obstinate, wayward and difficult. They have to be ‘broken in’ and trained; you cannot just jump on a young, untrained

Donkey and ride off, hence the significance of Luke’s comment that Jesus told them, “Go to the village ahead of you and as you enter it you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever

ridden” – but Jesus did; he was in control of all the obstinacy and waywardness of his sinful flesh. He controlled it, rode on top of it and brought the flesh under complete control.

We have all heard of someone being called ‘a silly ass’ (or donkey) and we all are silly asses at times, and the only way we can overcome ass like nature, is by remembering our Lord’s great example of self-control; controlling our own wayward natures, by having the word of God in our heads. So that we may when tempted be able to say a thus saith the Lord, it is written etc. But we will only be completely freed from this by the sacrifice our Lord has made.

In Zech. 9 v 10, the subject changes: “I” – that is the King, Jesus, “I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be broken”.

The chariots and war-horses are man’s armoury, symbolizing his supposed strength and control. Jesus will destroy them and give deliverance to Israel. Salvation will not be by the strength of Israel’s armies, but by Jesus, resulting in, v. 10, “He will; proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth”. Then indeed there will be ‘glory to God...and peace on earth’.

All of this made possible by the blood of God’s unalterable covenant. Jesus tells us, “This cup (of wine) is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20) which is referred to in Hebrews as, “the blood of the eternal covenant” (13:20) – ‘eternal’, the unalterable covenant.

The release of the prisoners out of the pit is the resurrection, not of everyone, but, v. 12, “the prisoner of hope”, and we understand that literally it is “prisoners of the hope”. What hope? Well, the hope of Israel. Paul says in Romans (8:24), “we are saved by the hope”, This hope is the living, motivating power that produces our commitment to the cause for Christ.

Perhaps we might think of the possible future fulfillment of these verses. The king of the north, like Alexander, as swift as a leopard, will sweep down upon Israel. All nations will be gathered for the assault upon Jerusalem; “multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision – between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives – perhaps such a dense concentration that much of the fighting will hand-to-hand.

Whilst this is going on, the saints are immortalised and are at Bozrah ready for the march of the ‘rainbowed angel’ which describes the multitudinous Christ. Isaiah asks, “Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this robed in splendour striding forward in the greatness of his strength?” None other than the multitudinous Christ. Perhaps Jesus leading the way on a donkey and the saints in their white robes of righteousness following him.

Perhaps their presence will be obscured from the vision of the world’s armies as they proceed slowly towards Jerusalem, and, as they come to the Mt. of Olives and Jesus’ feet touch it, it will split in two. The march continuing, Jesus will enter Jerusalem by the East Gate and maybe, like Melchizedek, he will give the victors (those that have overcome) bread and wine.

These are only thoughts and it is difficult to try and fit all the types into place, but whatever the fulfillment, it will be just wonderful.

The assembled armies will be frozen, spellbound as they see this immortal, bullet-proof army. The Israelis, being delivered from a humanly impossible situation, will look on him whom they pierced, and weep for him whom their fathers had despised and crucified, but who now is their Saviour.

It was because of our sins that Jesus had to be crucified. The privilege of the hope we have is certain for we are, as Peter says “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that we should show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Paul tells us (Rom. 11:29) that “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance”, in other words, God does not change His mind, He wants us for His purpose. He has redeemed and justified us, by the death and resurrection of His only-begotten Son, as represented by the emblems of which we are now going to partake.