
ZECHARIAH 9: 1 An oracle. the LORD's word is against the land of Hadrach, and will rest upon Damascus; for the eye of man and of all the tribes of Israel is toward the LORD;

Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine, were conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, and afterwards by Alexander. Some apply the beginning of this chapter (Zac 9:1-7) to the one event, and some to the other. The close of the seventh verse relates to the number of Philistines that should become proselytes to Judaism; (see Josephus Antiq. 14:15, 4); and the eighth, to the watchful providence of God over his temple in those troublesome times. From this the prophet passes on to that most eminent instance of God's goodness to his Church and people, the sending of the Messiah, with an account of the peaceable tendency and great extent of his kingdom, Zac 9:9, Zac 9:10. God then declares that he has ratified his covenant with his people, delivered them from their captivity, and restored them to favor, Zac 9:11, Zac 9:12. In consequence of this, victory over their enemies is promised them in large and lofty terms, with every other kind of prosperity, Zac 9:13-17. Judas Maccabeus gained several advantages over the troops of Antiochus, who was of Grecian or Macedonian descent. But without excluding these events, it must be allowed that the terms of this prophecy are much too strong to be confined to them; their ultimate fulfillment must therefore be referred to Gospel times.

Verse 1

The burden of the word of the Lord - The oracle contained in the word which Jehovah now speaks.

This is a prophecy against Syria, the Philistines, Tyre, and Sidon, which were to be subdued by Alexander the Great. After this the prophet speaks gloriously concerning the coming of Christ, and redemption by him.

Most learned men are of opinion that this and the succeeding chapters are not the work of Zechariah, but rather of Jeremiah; Hosea, or some one before the captivity. It is certain that Zac 11:12, Zac 11:13, is quoted Mat 27:9, Mat 27:10, as the language of Jeremiah the prophet. The first eight chapters appear by the introductory parts to be the prophecies of Zechariah: they stand in connection with each other, are pertinent to the time when they were delivered, are uniform in style and manner, and constitute a regular whole; but the six last chapters are not expressly assigned to Zechariah, and are unconnected with those that precede: - the three first of them are unsuitable in many parts to the time when Zechariah lived; all of them have a more adorned and poetical turn of composition than the eight first chapters, and they manifestly break the unity of the prophetic book.

I conclude, from internal marks, that these three chapters, (9, 10, 11), were written much earlier than the time of Jeremiah, and before the captivity of the ten tribes. They seem to suit Hosea's age and manner; but whoever wrote them, their Divine authority is established by the two quotations from them, Zac 9:9; Zac 11:12, Zac 11:13. See below.

The twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth chapters form a distinct prophecy, and were written after the death of Josiah, Zac 12:11; but whether before or after the captivity, and by what prophet, is uncertain, although I incline to think that the author lived before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. See on Zac 13:2-6 (note). They are twice quoted in the New Testament, Zac 12:10; Zac 13:7. - Newcome.

My own opinion is, that these chapters form not only a distinct work, but belong to a different author. If they do not belong to Jeremiah, they form a thirteenth book in the minor prophets, but the inspired writer is unknown.

The land of Hadrach - The valley of Damascus, or a place near to Damascus. Alexander the Great gained possession of Damascus, and took all its treasures; but it was without blood; the city was betrayed to him.

Damascus shall be the rest thereof - The principal part of this calamity shall fall on this city. God's anger rests on those whom he punishes, Eze 5:13; Eze 16:42; Eze 24:13. And his rod, or his arm, rests upon his enemies, Psa 125:3; Isa 30:23. See Newcome.

When the eye of man - Newcome translates thus: "For the eye of Jehovah is over man,

And over all the tribes of Israel."

This is an easy sense, and is followed by the versions.

ZECHARIAH 9: 2 and Hamath, also, which borders on it; Tyre and Sidon, because they are very wise.

Verse 2

And Hamath also shall border thereby - Hamath on the river Orontes; and Tyre and Sidon, notwithstanding their political wisdom, address, and cunning, shall have a part in the punishment.

These prophecies are more suitable to the days of Jeremiah than to those of Zechariah; for there is no evidence - although Alexander did take Damascus, but without bloodshed - that it was destroyed from the times of Zechariah to the advent of our Lord. And as Tyre and Sidon were lately destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, it is not likely that they could soon undergo another devastation.

ZECHARIAH 9: 3 Tyre built herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver like the dust, and fine gold like the mire of the streets.

Verse 3

And Tyrus did build herself - The rock on which Tyre was built was strongly fortified; and that she had abundance of riches has been already seen, Eze 28:1, etc.

ZECHARIAH 9: 4 Behold, the Lord will dispossess her, and he will strike her power in the sea; and she will be devoured with fire.

Verse 4

Will smite her power in the sea - See Eze 26:17. Though Alexander did take Tyre, Sidon, Gaza, etc.; yet it seems that the prediction relative to their destruction was fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar. See Amo 1:6-8; Zep 2:4, Zep 2:7.

ZECHARIAH 9: 5 Ashkelon will see it, and fear; Gaza also, and will writhe in agony; as will Ekron, for her expectation will be disappointed; and the king will perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon will not be inhabited.

Verse 5

Ashkelon shall see it, and fear - All these prophecies seem to have been fulfilled before the days of Zechariah; another evidence that these last chapters were not written by him.

Her expectation shalt be ashamed - The expectation of being succoured by Tyre.

ZECHARIAH 9: 6 Foreigners will dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.

Verse 6

A bastard shall dwell in Ashdod - This character would suit Alexander very well, who most certainly was a bastard; for his mother Olympia said that Jupiter Ammon entered her apartment in the shape of a dragon, and begat Alexander! Could her husband Philip believe this? The word signifies a stranger.

ZECHARIAH 9: 7 I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth; and he also will be a remnant for our God; and he will be as a chieftain in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.

Verse 7

I will take away his blood out of his mouth - The Philistines, when incorporated with the Israelites, shall abstain from blood, and every thing that is abominable.

And Ekron as a Jebusite - As an inhabitant of Jerusalem. Many of the Philistines became proselytes to Judiasm; and particularly the cities of Gaza, and Ashdod. See Josephus Antiq. lib. xlii., c. 15, s. 4.

ZECHARIAH 9: 8 I will encamp around my house against the army, that no one pass through or return; and no oppressor will pass through them any more: for now I have seen with my eyes.

Verse 8

I will encamp about mine house - This may apply to the conquests in Palestine by Alexander, who, coming with great wrath against Jerusalem, was met by Jaddua the high priest and his fellows in their sacred robes, who made intercession for the city and the temple; and, in consequence, Alexander spared both, which he had previously purposed to destroy. He showed the Jews also much favor, and remitted the tax every seventh year, because the law on that year forbade them to cultivate their ground. See this extraordinary account in Josephus Antiq. lib. xi., c. 8, s. 5. Bishop Newcome translates: "I will encamp about my house with an army, so that none shall pass through or return."

ZECHARIAH 9: 9 Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King comes to you! He is righteous, and having salvation; lowly, and riding on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Verse 9

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion - See this prophecy explained on Mat 21:5 (note).

Behold, thy King cometh - Not Zerubbabel, for he was never king; nor have they had a king, except Jesus the Christ, from the days of Zedekiah to the present time.

He is just - The righteous One, and the Fountain of righteousness.

Having salvation - He alone can save from sin, Satan, death, and hell.

Lowly - Without worldly pomp or splendor; for neither his kingdom, nor that of his followers, is of this world.

Riding upon an ass - God had commanded the kings of Israel not to multiply horses. The kings who broke this command were miserable themselves, and scourgers to their people. Jesus came to fulfill the law. Had he in his title of king rode upon a horse, it would have been a breach of a positive command of God; therefore, he rode upon an ass, and thus fulfilled the prophecy, and kept the precept unbroken. Hence it is immediately added: -

ZECHARIAH 9: 10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow will be cut off; and he will speak peace to the nations: and his dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Verse 10

I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem - No wars shall be employed to spread the kingdom of the Messiah; for it shall be founded and established, "not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts," Zac 4:6.

ZECHARIAH 9: 11 As for you also, because of the blood of your covenant, I have set free your prisoners from the pit in which is no water.

Verse 11

As for thee also (Jerusalem) by the blood of thy covenant - The covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Israelites in general, and ratified by the blood of many victims; until the time should come in which the Messiah should shed his blood, as typified by the ancient sacrifices.

I have sent forth thy prisoners - Those who were under the arrest of God's judgments; the human race, fast bound in sin and misery, and who by the pitifulness of his tender mercy were loosed, he dying in their stead.

ZECHARIAH 9: 12 Turn to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope! Even today I declare that I will restore double to you.

Verse 12

Turn you to the strong hold - Ye who feel your sins, and are shut up under a sense of your guilt, look up to him who was delivered for your offenses, and rose again for your justification. Ye have hope, let that hope lead you to faith, and that faith to the blood of the covenant; and, through that blood, to God, the Father of all.

I will render double unto thee - Give thee an abundance of peace and salvation.

ZECHARIAH 9: 13 For indeed I bend Judah as a bow for me. I have filled the bow with Ephraim; and I will stir up your sons, Zion, against your sons, Greece, and will make you like the sword of a mighty man.

Verse 13

When I have bent Judah - Judah is the bow, and Ephraim is the arrows; and these are to be shot against the Greeks. I am inclined, with Bp. Newcome, to consider that the language of this prophecy is too strong to point out the only trifling advantage which the Maccabees gained over Antiochus, who was of Macedonian descent; and it is probable that these prophecies remain to be fulfilled against the present possessors of Javan or Greece, Macedonia, and a part of Asia Minor.

ZECHARIAH 9: 14 The LORD will be seen over them; and his arrow will go flash like lightning; and the Lord GOD will blow the trumpet, and will go with whirlwinds of the south.

Verse 14

The Lord shall be seen over them - Shadowing and refreshing them, as the cloud did the camp in the wilderness.

His arrow shall go forth as the lightning - They shall be conquered in a way that will show that God fights for his followers.

The description here is very sublime; we have a good imitation of it in Nonnus: - Και τότε γαιαν
 ἅπασαν επεκλυσεν ὑετιος Ζευς, Πυκνωσας νεφεεσσιν ὄλον πολον· ουρανη γαρ Βρονταιοις
 παταγοισι Διος μυκησατο σαλπιγξ.

Nonn. Dionys., lib. 6. ver. 229. "When heaven's dread trumpet, sounding from on high,

Breaks forth in thunders through the darken'd sky;

The pregnant clouds to floods of rain give birth.

And stormy Jove o'erwhelms the solid earth."

J. B. B. C.

In these two verses there is a fine image, and an allusion to a particular fact, which have escaped the notice of every commentator. I must repeat the verses: Zac 9:13 : When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. Zac 9:14 : And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrows shall go forth like lightning.

The reader will consult what is said on Hos 7:16, relative to the oriental bow, which resembles a [figure C] in its quiescent state, and must be recurved in order to be strung. Here, Judah is represented as the recurved bow; Ephraim, as an arrow placed on the string, and then discharged against the Javanites or Greeks with the momentum of lightning; the arrow kindling in its course through the air, and thus becoming the bolt of death to them against whom it was directed.

Volat illud, et incandescit eundo,

Et quos non habuit, sub nubibus invenit ignes. "It flies apace; and, heating, mounts on high,

Glows in its course, and burns along the sky."

ZECHARIAH 9: 15 The LORD of Armies will defend them; and they will destroy and overcome with sling stones; and they will drink, and roar as through wine; and they will be filled like bowls, like the corners of the altar.

Verse 15

The Lord of hosts shall defend them - He alone is the sure trust of his Church.

Subdue with sling-stones - This was an ancient and powerful instrument in the hands of the Hebrews. See the note on Jdg 20:16.

They shall drink - After the victory gained as above, thy people shall hold a feast, and drink and be filled with wine. There is no intimation here that they shall drink the blood of their enemies, as some barbarous nations were accustomed to do. When they have gained the victory, they shall banquet abundantly on the spoils taken from the enemy.

As the corners of the altar - They shall pour out libations of wine at the foot of the altar, as the priests were accustomed to pour out the blood of the victims.

ZECHARIAH 9: 16 The LORD their God will save them in that day as the flock of his people; for they are like the jewels of a crown, lifted on high over his land.

Verse 16

Shall save them in that day - They are his flock, and he is their Shepherd; and, as his own, he shall save and defend them.

As the stones of a crown - נִזְר מִתְנוֹסֹסוֹת abney nezer mithnosoth, "crowned stones erecting themselves;" i.e., being set up by themselves, as monuments of some deliverance, they seem to be lifting themselves up; offering themselves to the attention of every passenger. It may however refer to stones anointed with oil; a sort of temporary altars set up to the Lord for a victory gained. The same word is used, Lev 21:12 : "Because the crown, נִזְר nezer, of the anointing oil of his God is upon him." Perhaps most of those upright stones, standing in circles, which pass for druidical monuments, were erected to commemorate victories, or to grace the tomb of an illustrious chief. These verses may refer to some final victory over the enemies of God's people.

ZECHARIAH 9: 17 For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! Grain will make the young men flourish, and new wine the virgins.

Verse 17

How great is his goodness - In himself and towards them.

And how great is his beauty! - His comeliness, holiness, and purity, put in and upon them.

Corn shall make the young men cheerful - They shall be gladdened and strengthened by plenty of food; and they shall speak aloud of God's mercies in their harvest home.

And new wine the maids - Who shall prepare the wine from an abundant vintage.