

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



"Not the King We Were Expecting"

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Zech. 9:9-17; Matt. 21:1-16; Gen. 49:10-11; Zeph. 3:14-20; Ps. 72:1-19; Is. 30:15; 42:7; 66:18-19

We tend to look for salvation in the things that appear strongest. We want the horse, the chariot, the army, the money, the right alliances, and the plan that makes sense. Israel struggled with that same temptation. Again and again, the Lord reminded His people that their security was never supposed to rest in military strength, wealth, or political alliances. So when Zechariah announces, *"Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you, a righteous one bringing salvation"* (Zech. 9:9), we are ready for this King to arrive in overwhelming power.

And then He comes on a donkey. Not a warhorse. Not a chariot. A donkey—and a young one at that. Centuries later, Yeshua entered Jerusalem exactly this way. The crowds cried, *"Hosanna to Ben-David!"* (Matt. 21:9), while the religious leaders struggled to recognize what children could see. The lame were being healed, the broken were drawing near, and God's house was being restored. Zechariah invites us to look past what we think power should look like and recognize the King who comes in righteousness, humility, salvation, and shalom.

1. WE EXPECTED A WARRIOR—BUT THE KING CAME ON A DONKEY

"Behold, your king is coming to you, a righteous one bringing salvation. He is lowly, riding on a donkey" (Zech. 9:9). After the opening verses of Zechariah 9, this is not necessarily the King we were expecting. Kingdoms are being brought low, pride is being cut off, and enemies are being dealt with. By the time we hear, *"your king is coming,"* we are ready for a warhorse and a sword. Instead, His "chariot" is a donkey. He is righteous and saving, yet He is lowly and humble. His very entrance challenges our assumptions about power.

Verse 10 strengthens the contrast: *"I will banish chariots from Ephraim and horses from Jerusalem, and the war bow will be broken. He will speak shalom to the nations"* (Zech. 9:10). The King not only comes without the weapons we expected; He removes the very things people had learned to trust. He breaks the bow and speaks **shalom**. His dominion extends *"from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the earth"* (Zech. 9:10), echoing Ps. 72. Yeshua's entrance on a donkey was not weakness. It declared that God's kingdom does not operate according to the expectations of this world.

2. WE EXPECTED THE POWERFUL TO BE VICTORIOUS—BUT THE KING CAME FOR PRISONERS.

Then the focus turns to the people He has come to rescue: *"By the blood of your covenant, I will release your prisoners from the waterless Pit. Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope!"* (Zech. 9:11-12). We might expect a victorious king to surround

himself with the strong and successful. Instead, this King turns toward prisoners trapped in a place of helplessness and almost certain death. The image recalls Joseph in the pit, Jeremiah in the cistern, and Israel in exile. Yet the Lord speaks of their release with such certainty that what is still future is described as though it were already done.

And then He gives them that beautiful name: “**prisoners of hope.**” They have known captivity, but captivity does not get the final word. They are bound to hope because they are bound to the faithfulness of God. “*Return to the stronghold,*” He says, “*I will restore twice as much to you*” (Zech. 9:12). Then He takes Judah and Ephraim—what had been divided—and places them together in His hand. This King does not simply gather those who already appear strong. He releases prisoners, restores what has been lost, reunites what has been divided, and places redeemed people into His hand.

3. WE EXPECTED THE KING TO DESTROY—BUT HE CAME TO SAVE AND RESTORE
By this point in the passage, we might expect the story to end with the total crushing of enemies. We expect a king’s victory to be measured only in destruction—who was overthrown, who was silenced, who was left standing on the battlefield. And there is certainly imagery of divine power here: “*Then ADONAI will be seen over them as His arrow flashes like lightning... ADONAI-Tzva’ot will defend them*” (Zech. 9:14–15). The Lord is not absent. He is over His people, surrounding them, shielding them, and acting on their behalf. But even here, the emphasis is not on His people becoming impressive in themselves. The emphasis is that **ADONAI is over them**. He is their covering. He is their defender. He is the One who comes with the shofar blast, making His presence known.

But the real surprise is how the passage ends. It does not climax with wreckage. It climaxes with salvation, beauty, and restoration. “*ADONAI their God will save them on that day as the flock of His people. They will be like gems of a crown sparkling over His land. How good and beautiful it will be!*” (Zech. 9:16–17). That is the contrast. Perhaps we expected a king whose triumph would be seen mainly in what he destroys. Instead, this King shows His triumph in what He **saves**, what He **heals**, and what He **restores**. He takes prisoners from the pit and makes them jewels in His crown. He gathers the scattered like a shepherd gathers his flock. He does not merely defeat the enemy; He brings His people into flourishing. That is the victory of the King we were not expecting.

CONCLUSION

Zechariah begins this section with a command to rejoice because “*your king is coming to you*” (Zech. 9:9). That is the heart of the passage. The answer is not that we find a better horse, build a stronger chariot, accumulate more wealth, or form a better alliance. The answer is that **the King comes to us**. He comes righteous and saving. He comes humble. He speaks shalom. He releases prisoners, calls them back to the stronghold, stands over His people, and transforms captives into jewels displayed for His glory.

So what are you trusting today? What is your horse? What is your chariot? Maybe some part of your life feels like a waterless pit—trapped by fear, disappointment, sin, or

circumstances you cannot change. Hear the word of the Lord: *“Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope!”* (Zech. 9:12). Bring your fear, your plans, your need, and your attempts at control to Yeshua. Let Him rule where you have been trying to secure yourself. Come to Him again with simple faith and say, “Hosanna—save now.” He may not be the King we were expecting, but He is exactly the King we need.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it significant that the promised King comes riding on a donkey rather than a horse or chariot?
2. What does the phrase **“prisoners of hope”** reveal about the certainty of God’s promises?
3. What are some modern “horses and chariots” that you are personally tempted to trust for security?
4. Is there an area of your life that feels like a “waterless pit”? What would it look like to *“return to the stronghold”* in that situation?
5. Zech. 9:16 pictures God’s people as gems in the King’s crown. How should belonging to the King affect the way we represent Him before others?

CLOSING PRAYER

ADONAI, thank You that our hope is not in horses or chariots, wealth, strength, or anything we can build for ourselves. Thank You for sending the righteous King, Yeshua, who comes with salvation and speaks shalom. Teach us to recognize Your ways even when they do not look like what we expected. Bring us out of every waterless pit and teach us to live as prisoners of hope.

We return to You as our stronghold. Break our dependence on everything that competes with our trust in You. Be over us, defend us, restore us, and use us for Your purposes. Make our lives like jewels in the crown of our King, reflecting Your goodness and glory to the world around us.

B’Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.