

# God's Work In The Nations

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[ 0 : 00 ] Zechariah chapter 9. It is God's word opened and preached and applied.! It gives clarity and correction to our vision,! realigns our hearts with reality, especially those unseen things that are only seen by faith.

Zechariah chapter 9. We'll read the first eight verses this evening. The word of the Lord is against the land of Hadach and will rest upon Damascus, for the eyes of men and all the tribes of Israel are on the Lord, and upon Hamath too, which borders on it, and upon Tyre and Sidon, though they are very skillful.

Tyre has built herself a stronghold. She has heaped up silver like dust and gold like the dirt of the streets. But the Lord will take away her possessions and destroy her power on the sea, and she will be consumed by fire.

Ashkelon will see it in fear. Gaza will writhe in agony, and Ekron too, for her hope will wither. Gaza will lose her king, and Ashkelon will be deserted.

Foreigners will occupy Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. I will take the blood from their mouths, the forbidden food from between their teeth.

[ 1 : 28 ] Those who are left will belong to our God and become leaders in Judah, and Ekron will be like the Jebusites. But I will defend my house against marauding forces.

Never again will an oppressor overrun my people, for now I am keeping watch. Well, what does Zechariah 9, 1 through 8 have to do with you?

Hadach, Damascus, Hamath, Tyre, Sidon. What do those cities and those countries' lands have to do with you? Well, they were the cities and the countries that surrounded little Judah 2,500 years ago.

But right here in Zechariah 9, 1 through 8, we have a beautiful lesson of God's sovereignty, his might, his presence, his care for his people, for us.

And this is a lesson that encourages us, that strengthens our faith. Now, I don't know how much you follow political events or worldwide news, but Friday morning, we woke up with Europe and the world in a bit of a tizzy and turmoil.

[ 2 : 53 ] The European Union was rocked as the UK said, we're leaving, we're out of here. And in response, the Prime Minister of Great Britain said, I'm resigning.

And all the stock markets of the whole world shook. Some dropped a little, some dropped a lot, but people were afraid.

People are hoping that the EU doesn't fall apart. I think that's a possibility now. Some people are hoping that it does fall apart.

The Tower of Babel, called the EU, is quaking. They're afraid. And there's a lot of turmoil. In the Bible, the nations, the world, is a lot of times poetically referred to as the sea, as this great tossing ocean.

One of the beasts in Revelation comes out of the sea, and he's this wet, dripping, stinking, seaweed-covered monster.

[ 3 : 59 ] Well, what do we see as we look out into our nation? What do we see as we look out into Europe and the world?

Well, we see it's a sea. It's in turmoil. And it's not a beautiful blue, crystal blue ocean, gently lapping on some Caribbean island.

It's more like the picture of the North Atlantic in the winter, and the waters are dark, and there's storms all over. It's all the people writhing in rebellion against the Lord, and at war against each other.

Now, we can look at that sea, and we can be afraid. We can lose confidence. We can lose hope. We can lose heart.

But Zechariah 9 says, we need to look above the sea and look to the Lord. Look up. The king is sitting on his throne. And the sea before him, Revelation 5 says it's like glass.

[ 5 : 09 ] Revelation 4 says it's like glass. And so he sat on the dark. Our God, our Father, our Lord, the one who loves us, sat on the dark, chaotic waters in Genesis 1-1, and he sorted them out.

And he's still king. And though we are little, and though we are just like little Judah 2,500 years ago, our God is the same. Our Lord is the same.

He is involved in the affairs of men. And that's what we see in this little section. All the polls were saying Brexit, the leaving of Britain, wasn't going to happen.

And everyone was confident that nothing was going to change. And they slapped each other on the back. And in the weeks preceding that, everyone thought it's going to go on, and people were making money.

But God shamed the wise. And so even now, he's at work. His hands are not idle. He rules over the affairs of nations. And that's what Zechariah 9 has to do with you.

[ 6 : 18 ] This is where it intersects your life. Because you live in that same ship, in the same storm-tossed waters. Now the main point of this little section is that God is going to destroy the nations, and he's going to save some people.

He's going to save among the nations. He's going to destroy and save among the nations. And no one can stop him. No one can stop him. That's the overall picture.

In verse 1, it says, The word of the Lord is against the land of Hadar, and will rest upon Damascus. The picture is God's... In Revelation, you see that image of the sword of his mouth.

It's the word of God. And when the word of God comes against someone in that way, it means judgment. And so here, the word of the Lord is against these lands.

Tyre's going to be burned. Ashkelon's going to be deserted. The rest of the Philistine cities are going to be abandoned. But at the same time, out of these people, some are going to be saved.

[ 7 : 24 ] Verse 7 says, Those who are left will belong to our God and will become leaders in Judah. After the judgment has swept through, people are going to be joining themselves to the Lord.

They're going to be converted. Verse 8 says, In the middle of this, God says, I'm going to protect and I'm going to save my people. I'm watching them. The images of a sentry, guarding.

You know the verse that says, The angel of the Lord encamps around his people. That's the picture. That's the Lord in the midst of all this turmoil. In the midst of the crashing ocean.

The Lord says, I'm encamped around them. I'm watching over them. Now we have like seven lessons. The first lesson is this.

It's a question. Why is God going to destroy these nations? Why is God going to do this? Why is God's word against them? Why is Tyre going to burn? Why is Ashkelon and Gaza going to be shaking in their boots?

[ 8 : 27 ] And thrown into this frenzy of fear. Why is God even now at work? Tearing down nations. Throwing babbles into confusion.

Well, the wonderful, the encouraging answer you see in verse 1. It says, For the eyes of men and all the tribes of Israel are on the Lord. They're watching him.

Their hope is in him. They're looking to him. Because God's people are looking to him to save them. That's the reason God is acting.

He's responding to the broken plea, the frightened cry, the look of his people. And so we are that persistent widow. We, the people of God, are that persistent widow that kept coming to the judge and saying, Give me justice against my enemy.

We're as weak as the widow. No power. No clout. The enemies were too strong for her. The enemies are too strong for us. The powers in high places, angelic and human, are too high for us to reach.

[ 9 : 38 ] Too strong for us to confound. And so out of our weakness, out of our need, where else can we turn? Who else can we look to?

And so God's children look to their father and they wait. We say the Lord will act. The Lord will do this.

And so we wait. What a powerful thing it is when the people of God wait on the Lord. Waiting on the Lord is the strongest thing that we can do when we put our hope and our expectation on Him.

And when we do that, Zechariah 9 says, the Lord takes the nations in hand and destroys them. Things that we can't do, God does.

And so God says, I won't. I can't let them wait forever. I'll give them justice and I'll give it to them quickly. And so He turns His word, His decree, His might against the nations.

[ 10 : 44 ] And He does it for our sake. That is so hard to believe. But that's His love for us. That's His faithfulness to us. That's His goodness to us.

Fathers, for the sake of our children, we act. Don't we? And our Father in Heaven is no different. For the sake of His children, He acts. He acts differently towards some than He does to His children.

Now before we move on, we have to see that there's something here for us to do. There's something here for us to do. If God acts on those, on the behalf of those who wait for Him, what should we do?

We should be waiting on the Lord. And so, when you see that fearsome sea tossing, and it seems out of control, and you feel that soared into your heart of fear, of uncertainty, I'm not sure what is going to happen.

I'm not sure if this begins to happen, what's going to happen to me? Well, like Peter, we need to look to Jesus. We need to look to Him and wait on Him with the eyes of faith, with the eyes of a child to his father, saying, Lord, Father, help me.

[ 12 : 04 ] Help us. Well, Satan loves, Satan loves for you to see the storm, and the thunder, and the lightning.

He loves you to focus on all that he is brewing up. But our God rides on the clouds, above them.

He makes the clouds as chariots, and the nations are helpless in His hands. The nations are helpless before Him. That's the second lesson.

So, the nations are helpless. Look at what Tyre has going for it. Look at the city of Tyre. Verse 2, they're very skillful. They're not rudimentary, backwoods, hardly can do anything.

They're skillful, skilled, technologically full of prowess, full of machines and processes. Tyre knew how to do things. They knew how to do hard things.

[13:04] They knew how to manage things, big things. The ships of Tyre sailed all throughout the Mediterranean and beyond. They went to Spain.

They went around Spain. So, you know, okay, here's Tyre. It's way on the other side of the Mediterranean. It's really close to Jerusalem and the big picture of things. It's really, it's close.

It's right there on the shore. But their ships ranged throughout the whole Mediterranean. Their ships went around Spain. They had copper and tin mines all the way in southern England.

And they'd go and they'd come and they'd sell. They knew how to do great things, impressive things. But their skill was not going to save them. It wasn't going to save them.

They had a great stronghold, verse 3 says. Tyre has built for herself a stronghold. Now, about 80 or 90 years before Zechariah's writing, Tyre had suffered a siege.

[14:08] King Nebuchadnezzar had besieged them for 13 years. It was a long siege, but because they were on the coast, they were able to survive. They were able to get supplies in.

And so they were able to stand up against Nebuchadnezzar for 13 years. But even that was too close for comfort. Tyre's wealthy. They have a lot to protect.

They have a lot of skill. And it's too close for comfort. And so what they did was they moved their city from the shore out to an island. Out to an island.

And then they took that island and they built a huge wall all the way around it so that the walls were right, the ocean would lap right up against those walls.

And they built a harbor into that city. And so this is a city that could not be taken. Could not be starved out. It could not be really surrounded. It was impregnable.

[15:08] But Zechariah 9 says their strength is not going to save them. And they were rich. They heaped up silver like dust and gold like dirt in the streets.

Gold and silver were so common in Tyre. They were very wealthy. But it says the Lord will take away her possessions and destroy her power on the sea and she will be consumed by fire.

her wealth was not going to save her. Skilled, strong, rich.

Does it sound like any nation that you know of? We are so similar to Tyre. It is chilling. And it should make us sit up and take notice.

because we have come to rely upon our skill. We have become, we have begun to rely on our skill of our military, our great technological weapons, our great technologies, the great processes, the machines that we can build, the things that we can do, hard things.

[16:23] Things unimaginable to so many people. The financial strength that we wield. So everyone is quaking in their boots about what's happening over the EU.

And person after person says, I don't know if it will make much of a difference here. And what has happened in our country? So here we have our skill, we have our strength, we have our money, and what has happened?

Have not those worldly idols led us away from God? God. Now, what only a few people did, people do continually, they mock God.

They say praying is useless. You might as well pray to the great spaghetti monster as to pray to God. Skill, wealth, strength, that was higher, it didn't save them, and it won't save us, it won't save any nation that stands against God.

God took out his broom, and like a housewife, swept higher into the sea. And are we really any more secure?

[ 17 : 33 ] It's a dangerous thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. It's true nationally, it's true personally, no amount of money can save you from the wrath of God.

What can a man give in ransom for his soul? What can he pay? all of money that Bill Gates has and Warren Buffet has, they won't pay for their souls.

No amount of exercise, strength, can save you from death. No amount of religiosity can save you from the one whose eyes look upon your heart and into your heart.

There's only one person who stood against the wrath of God, and it was the Son of God, and he was perfect. He was spotless, and that's why the last chapter we talked about, you grab a hold of him, you have faith in him, take firm hold of his robe or you will perish, because only Jesus can save you from that rising tide of God's wrath.

Now that's the second lesson. The third lesson is this, the wonderful way that God did it. the wonderful way that God did it. Now this is where we have an advantage over the original hearers, because we get to look at it from 2,500 years later.

[ 19 : 02 ] We get to look at it after God has fulfilled it. And so what is the wonderful way that God fulfilled his promise?

Defeated Tyre through Ashkelon, Gaza, destroyed them, captured Damascus, all the rest. How did he do it? Well, it wasn't something supernatural. God didn't send hail into Damascus and flatten the city.

He didn't send fire and brimstone like he did in Sodom and Gomorrah into Tyre or anything like that. It wasn't anything supernatural. supernatural. God doesn't have to do something supernatural to be at work.

That's something that we need to take to heart, that we need to remember that God is working all the time and just because he isn't doing something miraculous doesn't mean that he's not working.

Now, how does God carry out his word against Judah's enemies? Well, in a word, Alexander. Alexander the Great, if you want three words.

[ 20 : 09 ] Throughout this passage, it says, the Lord will do this, I will do this, I'm going to do that. God is taking the credit. God is saying, this is my hand at work.

I'm the one doing it. But, as we look back, what we see is that God wasn't acting supernaturally. He was using Alexander.

Alexander the Great. So, here we are in little Judah, 500 BC. And now we have to travel 150 years into the future, and we have to travel 1,650 miles, if Google's right, all the way to Macedonia.

And that's where God began working to fulfill his word. does God need something close at hand to fulfill his word? No, he has 1,650 miles away, God starts to fulfill his word.

Way over there, way over in Macedonia. Now, Macedonia is just north of Greece, and God began preparing his man. Now, Alexander's father, Philip, had gathered the Macedonians and had made them into a people.

[ 21 : 28 ] Before this, Philip, they were sort of like the backwoods nobodies of Greece. People knew about them, but they weren't doing anything fantastic, and they liked to fight with each other a lot.

But Philip took them, he united them, he united them into one nation. Now, God takes things that are small and makes them big.

God takes things that are small and makes them great. Rome was a little city, and it began, eventually it ruled the whole world. The Mongols were just some people on the backside of China, and they had the biggest land empire ever.

Well, God takes these Macedonians and he begins working, and all these mighty powers, superpowers are swirling around them, but it's God who sovereignly raises up the small to destroy the strong.

Now, Alexander, his father is the king, king, and he was educated in the finest Greek literature. So, his imagination as a little boy, he was growing up hearing about mighty heroes, Achilles, and Hector, and Ulysses, and Ajax, the Greek warrior who had a shield with seven layers of cowhide on it with bronze in between it.

[ 22:53 ] And so, you can imagine, little Alexander's mind is fired by scenes of glory and of combat. Now, his father held court, and so he had lots of people coming in, Persian delegations coming in.

Alexander was born into a world of nations. He was born in a huge world. Alexander, well, I've had some pretty good teachers.

my fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Nelson, good teacher. Mr. Cooper taught me science from freshman year to senior year. Alexander, Alexander's private tutor was Aristotle.

Do you see the difference? Alexander was trained, he was educated, and God gave him immense personal skills and great leadership abilities.

He was courageous, he was ambitious, he was daring, he had a mind for logistics and leading men, and God took him and set him on a course to destroy Persia.

[ 23:59 ] Why? Because God's people's eyes were on him. We need your help. So Alexander came down into Persia.

That's probably the land of Hadruk in this passage. And he defeated the Persians, this decisive battle where Persia's best and strongest faced him and he routed them.

And next, he turned his attention to Damascus. And he took Damascus. And the next city he took was Hamath. And Tyre was on his flank, it was on his side, and before he could go into the rest of Persia and take it, he had to take care of his flank.

He had to make sure that no one behind him was going to attack him. And so Tyre and the Philistines had to be taken. Now, remember, Tyre is unconquerable. We saw it.

They're strong, they're rich, they have years and years of experience on the national scene, they knew how to withstand sieges, they're stubborn, as strong as anyone, they're survivors, they're wily.

[ 25:10 ] they know how to take care of themselves, they know how to win, and they're on this unassailable island, and their navy is wrapped around that island.

So Alexander shows up on the beach, kicks a few pebbles in the stone, in the sea, and he starts his army building a land bridge, a causeway, out to the island.

and his ships are harassing the Tyre Navy, and his engineers under fire begin pouring dirt and sand and rocks into the ocean more and more every day, and it's building it out, out to that island until it reached the very walls, and Tyre fell.

Tyre was burned. Alexander did in seven months what Nebuchadnezzar couldn't do in 13 years. So the unconquered was conquered, the unassailable was burned, and so Alexander put Tyre in his rear view mirror, and now the Philistine cities who are down the road are shaking, and one by one they fall.

They're not really anything special. But not Jerusalem. It's interesting, Jerusalem was saved. According to the legend, and we don't know if it's true or not, there's no way to tell, but Alexander had a dream, and in that dream he was told not to touch Jerusalem.

[ 26:45 ] And then when he came to the city, the high priest who was leading the city, the chief person in the city, and speaking for the city, went out and talked to Alexander, and Alexander turned his army away.

Either way, it said, the Lord said, I will defend my house against marauding forces. They're taking everything else, but they won't take my house. They won't take you.

And they didn't. God's people survived. And so Alexander's rise, and his victorious march, who was working that whole time?

Our Father. Amen. He worked through the natural, through the hearts of men, through all those things, to fulfill his word.

So, we need to take that lesson to heart. It doesn't, just because something supernatural isn't happening, doesn't mean God isn't working. And just because something natural hasn't happened yet, it doesn't mean that God isn't working.

[ 27:57 ] just because we don't see it, doesn't mean that God isn't doing it. Well, lesson number four from this passage is the rise and fall of nations is according to God's will.

The rise and fall of nations is according to God's will. Macedonia was nothing when Zechariah wrote. They're not even on the radar in the world scene.

Persia was everything, and God decided to raise up Macedonia in order to humble Persia, to destroy the Persian empire, and destroy them. He did. The sea can seem so random.

It can seem so violent and out of control. And here we are, we're on this little boat sailing in this big sea. But this passage shows us that the rise and the fall of nations is in our God's hands.

It's going according to his will. And that should humble us. That should humble us especially, because we live in the superpower of our day.

[ 29:01 ] And it's fine to be patriotic, but it is godless to think that our country is destined for eternal greatness because of our strength, because of something in ourselves.

It is God who makes nations exceptional. And nations have been exceptional before our nation. And in time it will be God who makes those nations and us unexceptional.

And so what a joy, what an encouragement that your father, Christian, your father in heaven, has these things in his hands. He's controlling them. Lesson number five then is this, God's judgment is ongoing.

God's judgment is happening now. That's what I mean. It's beginning now. It's not just in the future. Sometimes we can think of that. We think that God's judgment is just all waiting for the last day.

We sang about that. But we need to be careful that we don't see that God is now judging. God is now taking sin in hand. Yes, there is a great day of final judgment.

[ 30:14 ] But final judgment isn't only judgment. Final judgment is the last one. But it's happening now. Nations are destroyed. They're conquered from the outside.

They're eaten up from the inside. We're both of them put together. Rome had pressure from the outside and they had sin and corruption on the inside and they couldn't last. Well, what about us?

As we see our nation getting devoured by the cancer of sin, spreading more and more, we are right to see that as judgment.

To let a nation go, to let a person go, is as much of an act of judgment as some outside power coming in. Romans 1 says God's wrath is being revealed.

It's being revealed if you have eyes to see it. And it's not always force. Sometimes it's simply saying go as far as you want.

[ 31 : 17 ] I'll let you go. So God's wrath is being revealed. God is not silent. God is not inactive. God is not idle in the politics of our world.

God was not inactive on Thursday and Friday when the UK decided to leave. He is sovereign. He is not idle on his throne. God is not in the Lord.

He is not as silent as our unbelief and our blindness can sometimes make him out to be.

Lesson number six is this. what we see in Zechariah 9, what is going on in history even now, there are only ripples of the coming storm.

There are only foreshadows and pictures of that final judgment. Like I said, the final judgment is the last one. But there are series. There are waves.

[ 32 : 27 ] It's moving towards the last one. In Revelation, John picks up the picture of the fall of Tyre. And he uses it to show the end of the nations forever.

Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and all the merchants, and all the mariners mourn. That's how Tyre made its money. On the sea, trading and selling.

Then the wealthy weep in Revelation 17 and Revelation 18. The rich are in agony. Tyre all over again as they're watching their ships go down to the bottom, and they're watching their beautiful buildings burn.

Except now, it's worldwide. It's not just one little city. It's the whole world. And they cry, alas, Babylon, it's gone.

So what you see in Zechariah 9 is this faint picture of that coming storm, of that last judgment, where no money, no might, no skill will save the nations.

[ 33 : 37 ] God has conquered the unconquerable before. And he's putting us on notice. He's putting the world on notice that the end is coming.

And again and again in Revelation it says, in one hour your doom has come. In one hour you've been brought to ruin. It was like 23 hours of great things, and then last hour it's done.

Not some slow buildup, not some slow decay, sudden destruction. And Zechariah 9 is a fair picture, is a notice of that.

When the end is coming, when judgment comes, it doesn't take God a long time to put it into practice or put it into action. Zechariah 9 is fair notice.

And so if you're caught in the city of destruction thinking, oh God can't do that, God won't do that, it's not time yet, or something like that, it won't be because God didn't warn you.

[ 34 : 43 ] It won't be because God didn't tell you. Again and again you see these pictures of the end. Now the last lesson is this, in the middle of judgment God is saving.

in the middle of this present judgment that we are living through, God is saving. Verse 7 and verse 8, God says, I will take the blood from their mouths and the forbidden fruit from between their teeth.

Now that could be judgment, but I think it fits better with the idea that that's a mercy. He's going to take the idolatry away from them. The idolatry that involved all the sacrifice and the forbidden foods and all the rest.

He says, I'm going to take away their idol worship. And he says, I'm going to bring them in. In the middle of this judgment, people are going to be saved. And so judgment is falling on these cities.

And some join God's people. And that's what we see. Judgment, present judgment strikes people in two different ways. It has two different effects. It either hardens them, makes them bitter and hate God all the more, or it wakes them up and it says, wait a second, what am I living for?

[ 35 : 58 ] And what Zechariah 9 is saying is that in the middle of all this judgment, God's saving mercy and his hand of mercy is extended and he's bringing in people.

They're pulled like brands out of the fire. And so what can we hope for in our world and in our country? that in the midst of all this, we can say, we can hope that God is saving.

But it's more than a hope. God promises us to do it here. And so we can say, oh, it's more than just a hope by and by. We can say the Lord has promised us to do this.

And so we can take this and pray it back to him. Lord, you said in the middle of judgment you would have mercy. You'd be saving. And so judgment is falling on our country.

Judgment is falling on our world. Lord, rescue, save out of them, out of these countries. That's a promise for us to pray. And that's a promise for you to believe for yourself.

[ 37 : 04 ] God is a judging God. But God is a saving God. And so take that promise to him. If you aren't saved, take God at his word.

Hold him to it. Repent and believe and you will be saved. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are at work amidst the nations.

That right now the world, though it seems out of control, seems so violent and storm tossed and yet you are enthroned above the circle of heaven.

And you do what you want in heaven and on earth. And you raise up and you destroy. And before you, the nations are like a drop in the bucket. Less than nothing.

So we praise you, our great God, for being so awesome, being so big, for being such a glorious king. and we thank you for your great love for your small, little, besieged people.

[ 38 : 15 ] We thank you that you care for us. So help us to go in the strength of that, in the joy of that, in the boldness of that. That of all people, we would have the audacity to be happy and joyful and strong-hearted when we see so much of the world falling apart.

That we have a God who rules and reigns and does what he wants, and he has taken notice of us, and he has loved us. So please take these words and strengthen our hearts.

Take these words and bring conviction and make yourself known and felt and experienced in everyone's lives here. I pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.