

CHAPTER XXXIX

ISRAEL RESTORED

ZECHARIAH, CHAPTER 10:1-12

RV . . . Ask ye of Jehovah rain in the time of the latter rain, even of Jehovah that maketh lightnings; and he will give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field. For the teraphim have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie; and they have told false dreams, they comfort in vain; therefore they go their way like sheep, they are afflicted, because there is no shepherd. Mine anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the he-goats, for Jehovah of hosts hath visited his flock, the house of Judah, and will make them as his goodly horse in the battle. From him shall come forth the corner-stone, from him the nail, from him the battle bow, from him every ruler together. And they shall be as mighty men, treading down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle; and they shall fight, because Jehovah is with them; and the riders on horses shall be confounded. And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them back; for I have mercy upon them; and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am Jehovah their God, and I will hear them. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine; yea, their children shall see it, and rejoice; their hearts shall be glad in Jehovah. I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them; and they shall increase as they have increased. And I will sow them among peoples; and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and shall return. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; the place shall not be found for them. And he will pass through the sea of affliction, and will smite the waves in the sea, and all the depths of the Nile shall dry up; and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart. And I will strengthen them in Jehovah; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith Jehovah.

LXX . . . Ask ye of the Lord rain in season, the early and the latter; the Lord has given bright signs, and will give them abundant rain, to every one grass in the field. For the speakers have uttered grievous things, and the diviners have seen false visions, and they have spoken

false dreams, they have given vain comfort: therefore have they fallen away like sheep, and been afflicted, because there was no healing. Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I will visit the lambs; and the Lord God Almighty shall visit his flock, the house of Juda, and he shall make them as his goodly horse in war. And from him he looked, and from him he set the battle in order, and from him came the bow in anger, and from him shall come forth every oppressor together. And they shall be as warriors treading clay in the ways in war; and they shall set the battle in array, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be put to shame. And I will strengthen the house of Juda, and save the house of Joseph, and I will settle them; because I have loved them; and they shall be as if I had not cast them off: for I am the Lord their God, and I will hear them. And they shall be as the warriors of Ephraim, and their heart shall rejoice as with wine: and their children also shall see it, and be glad; and their heart shall rejoice in the Lord. I will make a sign to them, and gather them in; for I will redeem them, and they shall be multiplied according to their number before. And I will sow them among the people; and they that are afar off shall remember me: they shall nourish their children, and they shall return. And I will bring them again from the land of Egypt, and I will gather them in from among the Assyrians; and I will bring them into the land of Galaad and to Libanus; and there shall not even one of them be left behind. And they shall pass through a narrow sea, they shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deep places of the rivers shall be dried up; and all the pride of the Assyrians shall be taken away, and the sceptre of Egypt shall be removed. And I will strengthen them in the Lord their God; and they shall boast in his name, saith the Lord.

COMMENTS

In chapter nine, verses nine through ten, Zechariah exalted at the coming of Messiah. In 9:11-17, he interrupted his rejoicing to predict the victorious struggle with the Greeks which would precede His actual coming. In chapter ten, he returns to the theme of Zion triumphant through the Messiah.

(Verse 1) The key to this chapter seems to be "in the time of the latter rain."

To understand the symbolism here, we must know something of the climate of the holy land. During summer it almost literally never

rains. From May first through October fifteenth, one can almost guarantee no rain will fall.

The rainy season, from October to May, comes in three parts. They are known as the first or former rains, the winter rains, and the latter rains. The former are the light rains of October and the early days of November. These moisten the soil after the summer drought and allow the planting of winter grain.

The heaviest rains are the winter rains, which fall during December, January and February. The bulk of the water in the land comes from these rains.

Most vital to the completion of the harvest are the *latter rains*. These perfect the fruit and grain just prior to harvest, and so are most welcome and celebrated of all. (cf. *Joel 2:21-24*)

In a land where water is always in such critical supply as in Palestine, it is not surprising that rain should become a favorite symbol of divine blessing. (eg. *Isaiah 44:3-4, Hosea 6:3, Psalms 72:6*)

It is essential that the rains come, it is equally essential that they come at the proper time. Lack of rain at the right time results in complete crop failure. The *latter rains* are essential to the *final* perfection of the crop. Without the *latter rain* all that has developed through the former and winter rains will be lost.

By "rain in the time of the latter rain," Zechariah means God's blessing at the critical point in the history of His people when the fruit of His purpose was nearly ripe for harvest. The coming of the Messiah would usher in the fulfillment of God's purpose in Israel. Now that the people are back in the land and the temple is restored, the harvest season is rapidly drawing near.

God had planted the seed in the call of Abraham. His blessings upon the patriarchs were the "former rains." His continued blessings upon them through the centuries since Moses had nourished them as the winter rain. Now they must ask for the rain in the time of the latter rain in order that God's harvest may be realized in the coming of the long-awaited Christ.

(Verse 2) The prophet is concerned that prayer for the latter rains be made to Jehovah. Previous to the captivity their ancestors had asked the blessing of other gods.

The *teraphim* were household idols or images. (cp. *Genesis 31:19,30, Judges 7:5*) In light of *I Samuel 19:13* it seems they bore the likeness of some human figure. They also took the form of the signs of the Zodiac and other instruments of astrology. Hosea had used

the word to describe the idolatrous state of the people prior to the captivity. (*Hosea 3:4*)

Zechariah's use of the term here indicates his desire that the returned people not repeat the error of their fathers. The blessings required for the realization of Jehovah's purpose must come from Him. All else is vanity.

The *diviners* have had false visions. In the mystery religions associated with Baal various absurd methods were used to conjure up supernatural information concerning future events. Hallucinations were drunk as potions and the mind-expanding "trips" of the diviners were considered as divinely directed visions.

Other devices included the shooting of arrows to predict the direction of a person whose name was engraved thereon. (eg. *Ezekiel 21: 21*) The declaring staff, or divining rod, employed by some present-day superstitions finds its origin in these practices.

The result of such ridiculous superstitions is to cause those who follow them to go their way like stray sheep. Isaiah had said of the pre-exilic people whose religion was shot through with Baal worship, "All we like sheep have gone astray." (*Isaiah 53:6*) Jesus would look with compassion on His contemporaries when He saw them "as sheep having no shepherd." (*Matthew 9:36*)

(Verse 3) The *shepherds* are the spiritual leaders of the people, the *he-goats* the civil leaders. Previously those who held these positions had led the people after false gods. God's anger is kindled against such leadership. He will not allow it to go unpunished.

Jehovah has personally visited His flock. They are no longer to be victimized by such leadership. Here we again see Zechariah's Messianic insight. In the coming of the Messiah, Jehovah visited His flock, the house of Judah.

The Hebrew *Yaweh* (Jehovah) literally means "the one who is." He is ultimate reality understood as a Person. The Septuagint uses the Greek *Kurios* (Lord) to translate *Yaweh*. This word is applied to Jesus by those who were familiar with its Old Testament meaning. The conclusion of the apostles was that He is "both Lord (*Kurios*) and Christ." (*Acts 2:36*) Jesus is Jehovah, Emanuel, God with us.

He visited Judah, the Jews, and the result was the setting aside of the shepherds (*ie.* spiritual leaders, priesthood) and the rejection of the he-goats when the political system which was national Israel was wiped out by the Romans.

The sense of Zechariah's statement here is the declaration of Jehovah's intention to accomplish the ultimate deliverance of His people.

(Verse 4) The Jews were no longer to be subject to foreign rule. "From him," *ie.* from Judah, shall come its ruler. The Maccabean deliverers from Antiochus Epiphanes fulfilled the primary meaning of this prophetic promise, but it looks forward to the Messiah.

The figure of the corner-stone is one of the best known of those applied to the Christ in the New Testament. Jesus applied it to Himself. (*Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17*) Peter applied it to Him (*Acts 4:11, I Peter 2:7*) as did Paul (*Ephesians 2:20*).

The *nail* was in reality a large peg in the center of the tent upon which were hung most of the valuables of the nomadic shepherd. In prophetic type the glories of the people hung on Juda Maccabee. In point of factual fulfillment, they hang on the Messiah.

God's people will not need to depend upon any worldly alliance. He will Himself be their battle bow. (cp. *Psalms 45:4-5, Revelation 6:2*)

(Verses 5-12) This section must look beyond the Maccabean period as well as beyond the post-Babylonian restoration for its fulfillment. To see its real meaning we must bear in mind several significant terms used here by Zechariah, and we must keep in mind that he deliberately does *not* use certain other terms.

First, in this entire chapter the term Judah is used consistently, *never Israel*. Judah signifies the Jews as a political-ethnic group, whereas Israel, which does not appear here, is the covenant name for those whose relationship to God is based on faith rather than national or racial origin.

Second, the house of Judah is joined by the house of Joseph. Judah is, technically, the southern kingdom while Joseph is the ten northern tribes.

Third, the Hebrew verb here translated "I will bring (them) back" is a compound word which includes also "I will place them." (cp. *Jeremiah 32:37*)

Fourth, the reason for the restoration here is not merit on the part of the Jews, but "I have mercy upon them."

Fifth, "they shall be as though I had not cast them off. for I am Jehovah their God, and I will hear them."

We are dealing with God's ultimate intention for the Jewish people. *Jew* and *Israel* are now two separate concepts. Jew means the nation, the race. Israel means God's covenant people. In the Messianic age, especially in the writings of Paul, this distinction becomes very sharp. The church, composed of obedient believers from every race, is now God's Israel.

But what of the Jews?

(Verse 5) One cannot be dogmatic when dealing with apocalyptic prophecy. On the other hand, one cannot afford to be blind to what is taking place presently in the middle east. In four wars fought since the birth of the present state of Israel, not only those who warred against them, but the entire world has been confounded by the repeated victories of the Israelis against overwhelming odds.

(Verse 6-7) The term "Israel," applied to the modern state of the Jews is a misnomer, because the present state is Jewish. It ought more accurately be called Judah, meaning covenant people. The Christian church is Israel.

In this modern Jewish state the house of Judah (the ancient southern kingdom) and the house of Joseph (the people of the ancient northern kingdom) are indistinguishable. Few modern Jews, excepting those named Cohen (priest) or Levi, know their tribal origins.

The Jews, as a race and as a national entity, were cast off *per se* upon their rejection of Jesus. There is no other historic fulfillment of this threat to cast them off. Today they are as though they had not been cast off. Again there is no historic fulfillment of Zechariah's prophetic promise to bring back and place them until the establishment of the modern state of Israel.

Today's Jewish Israeli does indeed rejoice. Their hearts are glad in Jehovah. Specifically they rejoice because they believe (both Orthodox and Reformed) that the recent history of the Jewish state marks the beginning of the Messianic age. The irony of their rejoicing is not in their recognizing of the coming of the Messianic age, but in their misinterpreting the preparation for His *return* as preparation for His *first* appearing.

(Verses 8-12) In western Jerusalem today there is a grotesquely beautiful memorial to the Nazi holocaust in which six million Jews were exterminated. The building is built in the form of the gas chambers of the concentration camps. The stones in the walls are symbolic of the corpses piled high in their desperate attempts to escape the unexpected gas. An eternal flame burns in a wrought iron brazier to symbolize the cremation room, and on the black marble floor in gold letters are the names of Auschwitz, Buchanwald, and all the other horror chambers in which helpless men, women and children died for being Jews.

In the basement room are larger-than-life reproductions of Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda, and pictures of the concentration camp barracks: a record of utter nauseating barbarism.

To visit this shrine, in the midst of the modern miracle that is today's Jewish nation, is to know the meaning of "*I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them; they shall increase as they have increased.*" The word "hiss" should more accurately be translated "whistle." The Lord will call the Jews as the shepherd whistles for his sheep. Those who were sown among the peoples because of their rejection of the Christ, have indeed remembered Jehovah in far countries. True, they are plagued with their share of self-acclaimed atheists, as are all nations, but throughout the world and in the concentration camps of Europe they have paid dearly for remembering their God. It was their attempts to keep His law which stamped them as peculiar enough to foster the kind of racism and bigotry to which Nazi Germany subjected them.

It is true, the Jews stood outside Pilate's judgement hall and cried for the blood of God's Son to be upon their heads and the heads of their children. (*Matthew 27:25*) But enough is enough. "*Except the Lord of Sabbaoth had left us a seed, we had become Sodom and Gomorrah.*" (*Isaiah 1:9*, cp. *Romans 11:29*)

No time in history, since Zechariah, has seen a mass return of Jews to the ancient homeland until the years just following the second world war. It seems He has "brought them back" and "placed them." The reason is not merit, but mercy for the sake of the fathers.

Paul tells us "I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, (we Gentile believers) that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in . . ." (*Romans 11:25*) Modern historians are describing the age since World War II as the "post-Christian era." The term is a misnomer, but it is evidence of a significant historic phenomenon. The time when most Gentiles were willing at least to admit the influence of Christ on their culture, if not actually to accept Him personally, is past. In my opinion we are witnessing the end of Paul's "time of the Gentiles," as the primary participants in the program of God.

It is too soon to evaluate this in terms of eschatology, but there can be little doubt we are witnessing some very significant events in today's state of Israel.

Zechariah 10:10 predicts God's bringing of Jews from Egypt, Assyria, Gilead (modern Jordan) and Lebanon at a time when ". . . *place shall not be found for them.*" One hears much today about a million and a half Arab refugees who were driven from their homes in the establishment of the modern Jewish state. There is no way to

morally justify this, and no reason to assume it was God's will. But, it is not so commonly known that the United Nations' partitioning of Palestine also displaced some 700,000 Jews in the surrounding Arab lands. These have been assimilated into Israel, but "a place was not found for them" in the lands named here by Zechariah.

The exact meaning of *Zechariah 10:11* in the present middle eastern situation is difficult to ascertain. Egypt's much touted Aswan dam, which was supposed to be the means of a great economic revival in that nation has proven to be something less than an unmixed blessing. Marshes which once bred an abundance of game are now dried up. The death-dealing microscopic parasites which have always been a danger to those who would stick their feet in the Nile have reached near epidemic proportions. The Delta is receding since the river is no longer rushing into the Mediterranean, and the fishing grounds off the mouth of the Nile have been all but abandoned. Can this be what is described here by the prophet in connection with the restoration of the Jewish state?

The pride of Assyria has indeed been brought down in the Israeli defeat and occupation of the Golan heights overlooking the Galilee.

(Verse 12) If we are correct, if what we are seeing in the middle east is a fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy, there is a more and greater development yet to come. The world would indeed be confounded if the Israeli's should fully realize that it is God Who has wrought in and for them . . . if they did actually begin to "walk up and down in His name."

Chapter XXXIX—Questions

Israel Restored

1. In this chapter Zechariah returns to the theme _____.
2. The key to the chapter seems to be "in the time of the latter rain." Explain the climatic circumstances in the holy land which give rise to this term.
3. What is peculiarly essential about the *latter* rains as opposed to the former and winter rains?
4. What event in the Old Testament history of the Jewish people answers to the "former rain?"
5. What to the "winter rain?"
6. What were the teraphim?
7. What is Zechariah's desire concerning the prayers of the people?

8. What was the result of praying for protection to false gods?
9. Who are the shepherds of verse three? the he-goats?
10. What is the literal meaning of Yaweh (Jehovah)?
11. Show the relationship of this meaning of Jehovah to the term Lord applied to God in the Septuagint and to Jesus in the New Testament.
12. What was the result, in relation to the spiritual leaders, of Jesus' visit to Israel?
13. Discuss the "corner stone" in verse four.
14. Discuss the "nail" in verse four.
15. Verses five through twelve must look beyond _____ as well as _____ for its fulfillment.
16. In Zechariah 10, _____ and never _____ signifies the Jews.
17. The uniting of Joseph and Judah represents the uniting of the old _____ and _____ kingdoms.
18. The Hebrew word translated "I will bring them back" is a compound word which also includes _____.
19. The reason for the Jewish restoration described in chapter ten is not merit but _____.
20. In this chapter we are dealing with God's ultimate _____.
21. Jew and _____ are two separate concepts.
22. Jew means _____.
23. Israel means _____.
24. The _____ composed of obedient believers from every race is now God's _____.
25. The Jews as a race were cast off upon _____.
26. The modern Israeli Jew believes that the present Jewish state marks the beginning of the _____.
27. The word "hiss" really means _____ (10:8)
28. What is meant by "Except the Lord of Sabbathath had left us a seed, we had become as Sodom and Gomorrah?"
29. Discuss this chapter in light of the current developments in the middle east, particularly the holy land.
30. In your opinion, what would be the effect upon the world if modern Israel were to openly declare that their victories have been wrought by God in fulfillment of prophecy?