

Heaven's Best Gift (Zechariah)



SABBATH—JUNE 15

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Zechariah 8; Zechariah 9:9; Zechariah 12:1–10; Zechariah 13:7–9, 14; Matthew 21:9; John 19:37.

MEMORY VERSE: “The LORD their God will save his people on that day. They will be like sheep that belong to his flock. They will gleam [shine] in his land like jewels in a crown” (Zechariah 9:16, NlrV).

KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT: Zechariah has some wonderful prophecies¹ about the Messiah (Chosen One). These point to Jesus and support our faith in Him.

AT THE HEART OF THE BIBLE MESSAGE LIES THE MOST BEAUTIFUL STORY EVER TOLD. That is the story of the Creator God. In the person of His Son, He left the glory of heaven to save people from sin and death. Several prophecies are found in the second half of Zechariah about the Messiah. They are Old Testament promises about Jesus—the One who did all this for us.

These special promises first were given to God's people who lived in Zechariah's dangerous times. The promises were to keep the people focused on (looking toward) the promise of salvation. The original meaning of these prophecies never should be ignored. But their importance never should be limited to how they were fulfilled (came true) in the past. Instead, we will look at how they were fulfilled in Jesus. These promises and how they came true were meant for the whole world, not just for the Jews. They have influence on the future of the world and on final events.

1. prophecies—special messages from God, often explaining what will happen in the future.

SUNDAY—JUNE 16**“THE ROBE OF A JEW”
(Zechariah 8)**

Beginning with chapter 8, the book of Zechariah changes topics. This is a great change. The Lord sends a series of messages that tell the future of the world and of God's people. Some of the verses from these chapters are not easy to understand. But the future end of all things is clearly positive.

Read Zechariah 8. What principles (important rules) can you learn that have meaning for us as Seventh-day Adventists?

God's plan was that Jerusalem would be a safe place again with old people sitting in streets filled with playing children (Zechariah 8:4, 5). To those who lived in a city overrun by conquerors, the promise of streets safe for young and old sounded like a dream.

Instead of remaining forever a small nation, God's people were to become a magnet, pulling all nations together to worship the Lord, King of the whole earth (Zechariah 14:9). The use of the words “all languages” (NIV) in Zechariah 8:23 shows that the prophecy (special message) was about a worldwide movement.

Like Isaiah (Isaiah 2) and Micah, who lived during Isaiah's time (Micah 4), Zechariah was shown by God that the day would come when people from many cities and nations would

go up to Jerusalem to pray and accept the Lord. God's presence in Zion (a symbol of the Jews) generally will be recognized. And His blessings will flow to those who worship Him.



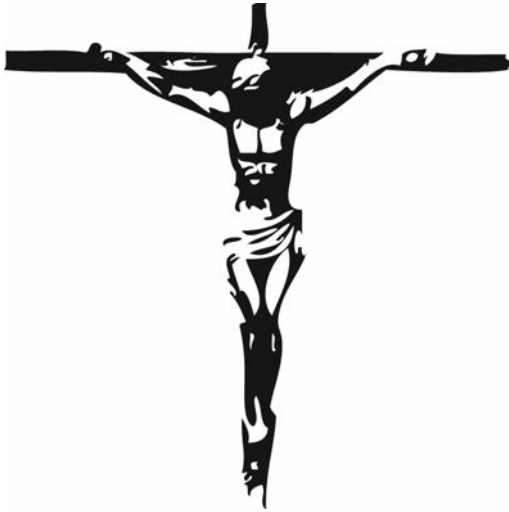
God's plan was for Jerusalem to be safe again for young and old.

The Gospel stories (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) tell that these prophecies about the Messiah begin to be fulfilled (completed) through the ministry (work done for God) of Jesus Christ. For example, Jesus says that when He is lifted up from the earth, He “will bring all people” to Himself (John 12:32, NIV).

The church of Christ is also called the “Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16). It is honored in our time to have a part in this mission. We, the church and its members, are to carry the light of salvation all over the earth. In this way the people of God can be a great blessing to the world.

Read Zechariah 8:16, 17. At a time when our church is wishing

for revival (new life in Christ), how can we learn to avoid the things that God says He hates?



Jesus promised He would draw all people to Himself.

MONDAY—JUNE 17

THE KING OF PEACE (Zechariah 9:9)

Read Zechariah 9:9. How does the New Testament use this verse to mean Jesus? Read Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:9, 10; Luke 19:38; and John 12:13–15.

Jesus, the future King, rode on a donkey into Jerusalem, and the people rejoiced. In the Bible, rejoicing and shouting for joy is connected with the celebration of God as King (Psalm 47; Psalm 96; Psalm 98). This gentle Ruler will bring righteousness (holiness), salvation, and lasting peace. His kingdom will be in all parts of the earth.

When Jesus victoriously rode a donkey into Jerusalem only days

before His death, many people cheered His coming. Some rejoiced, hoping that Christ would overthrow Rome's power and establish God's kingdom in Jerusalem. But instead of letting Himself be crowned as Israel's king, Jesus died on the cross and then rose from His grave. There is no doubt that He disappointed many of His followers. They expected a warrior king. Little did they know that what they wanted had very little to do with what they were going to get. And that was the death of Jesus instead.

“Christ was following the Jewish custom for a king's entry. The animal [donkey] on which He rode was the kind of animal ridden by the kings of Israel. Prophecy had foretold that in this way the Messiah should come to His kingdom. As soon as Jesus was seated upon the colt a loud shout of victory rang through the air. The people hailed Him as Messiah, their King. Jesus now accepted the honor which He had never before permitted. And the disciples [His followers] accepted this as proof that their glad hopes were to be realized [come true] by seeing Him become a king on the throne. The people believed that the hour of their freedom from Roman rule had come.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 570.

Much has been written about how the crowd was all excited about Jesus. But when things did not go right, many in that same crowd turned away from Him. Some even openly rebelled (turned) against

Him. What can this event teach us about the danger of false hope? For example, you might claim a promise for healing or for victory over a sin, but it does not happen as you thought it would. How can we develop a faith that will not fail, even when things do not work out as we hoped?



The people hailed Jesus as their King only days before His death.

TUESDAY—JUNE 18

THE ONE PIERCED (NAILED TO THE CROSS) (Zechariah 12:10)

Chapters 12–14 of Zechariah show several things that could have happened if Israel had been faithful to God. First, the Lord would have brought total victory over the powers of evil that tried to oppose God's plan of salvation (Zechariah 12:1–9). After all, Jerusalem was to be God's

instrument (tool) toward this victory. But the victory itself would have come when the Lord stepped in to help His people. In the end, the enemy would have been fully defeated and destroyed.

Zechariah 12:10 shows what would have happened to Jerusalem if Israel had been faithful. And then the verse moves to the topic of God's faithful people. Following the victory, God's people would fully accept their Lord. God's Spirit of grace² and blessing would be poured on the leaders and the people. This work of the Spirit then would lead to full repentance³ and spiritual revival.⁴ Our church is also trying to encourage members to have full repentance and spiritual revival.

As God pours out His Spirit, His people look upon Jesus whom they have pierced (nailed to the cross) and mourn for Him as one mourns the death of an only son. The original Hebrew word for "pierced" always describes some type of physical beating. This usually leads to death (Numbers 25:8; 1 Samuel 31:4). The people's great sadness is made worse when they understand that Jesus Christ died because of their own sins.

Read Zechariah 12:10. How does the apostle (teacher and leader) John connect this verse with Christ's crucifixion (death on the cross) and His second coming? Read John 19:37; and Revelation 1:7.

2. grace—God's gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

3. repentance—showing sorrow for past sins and turning away from them.

4. revival—a renewed spiritual life.

One Jewish interpretation (explanation) is that this verse points to the experience of the Messiah. Of course, it is right. The verse is talking about Jesus and His death on the cross (compare⁵ with Isaiah 53).

“Jesus’ death on Calvary calls for the deepest emotion [strong feeling]. Upon this subject you will be excused if you show great feeling. Christ was so wonderful and so innocent. Yet, He suffered such a painful death. He accepted the full weight of the sins of the world. But our thoughts and imaginations can never fully understand His death.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [Messages] for the Church*, volume 2, page 213. How can you grow in your understanding of what His death means to you and what it offers you?

WEDNESDAY—JUNE 19

THE GOOD SHEPHERD (Matthew 26:31)

For many hundreds of years, both Jewish and Christian readers of the Bible have found many examples about the Messiah in Zechariah’s book. Christians, of course, have understood that these verses mean the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the victorious but peaceful King (Zechariah 9:9). He was the One who was pierced (nailed to the cross) (Zechariah 12:10). He was

the Shepherd who was struck down (Zechariah 13:7).

In Zechariah 13:7–9, Zechariah sees a scene in which the sword of the Lord’s judgment (“punishment”) goes against the Good Shepherd. Earlier Zechariah sees the sword being raised against a “worthless shepherd” (Zechariah 11:17, NIV). But in this verse, the Good Shepherd is struck, and the flock scatters. His death leads to a time of trouble and testing of God’s people. During that time some die, but all of the faithful are made pure.

Read Matthew 26:31 and Mark 14:27. How did Jesus use this prophecy to explain what was going to happen that night? More important, what should that whole event (the disciples running away when they are faced with danger; see Matthew 26:56 and Mark 14:50) teach us about the faithfulness of God as compared with human unfaithfulness?

The example of God as a shepherd is found in many places in the Bible. It begins with the book of Genesis (Genesis 48:15, NIV) and ends with Revelation (Revelation 7:17). Through Ezekiel, God says He is not pleased with the false shepherds of His people. And He promises to look for the lost sheep and take care of them. Using these words to mean Himself, Jesus announces that He is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11).

5. compare—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

Think of when you have been unfaithful to the Lord. How did He continue to show you mercy and grace? What must your answer be to that mercy and grace?



Jesus promised to look for His lost sheep and to care for them.

THURSDAY—JUNE 20

KING OF THE WHOLE WORLD (Zechariah 14)

Read Zechariah 14. How should we understand what Zechariah is saying here?

In the last chapter of his book, Zechariah describes a day when all rebellious⁶ nations will turn against Jerusalem. At the last moment, the Lord will free His people and establish His eternal kingdom on the earth. All who oppose Him will be destroyed. All obedient nations will worship the one true God. The Lord will be king

over the whole world. There will be one Lord, and His name will be honored over all names. The great “I AM” shows all God is and all He always will be. These things would have happened if Israel had remained faithful. But they still will be fulfilled in a greater way when God’s people everywhere are rescued at the Second Coming.

When Zechariah announces the coming of the Messiah, he does not show the difference between His first and second comings. As with other prophets (special messengers), Zechariah sees the coming kingdom of the Messiah as one glorious (wonderful) future. But with Christ’s first coming, we now can tell the difference between the two comings. We also can feel thankful for everything that Jesus did for our salvation on the cross. So, we joyfully can look forward to going to God’s eternal kingdom (read Daniel 7:14).

The end of Zechariah’s book describes Jerusalem in its glory with its people honored and safe. Saved people from all nations will take part in the worship of the eternal King. The entire city of Jerusalem will be filled with the holiness of the temple.

When we study these glorious promises together with the overall teaching of the Bible, we believe that Zechariah’s prophecies will be finally fulfilled in the New Jerusalem. In the Holy City, God’s people from everywhere will come together and worship Him forever. But this all will happen only after the second coming of Jesus. Their praises will be about

6. rebellious—at war with God.

God's salvation, goodness, and power, just as the famous Song of the Sea says as it comes to the end: " 'The Lord will rule forever and ever' " (Exodus 15:18, NIV). Bible prophets and faithful people from the past all waited expectantly for this great closing event.

Think deeply about the final salvation that is promised to us—a new heaven and a new earth with no sin, death, suffering, or loss. Why do you have this hope? And how can you remember your reasons daily, especially in times of trouble, fear, and pain?

FRIDAY—JUNE 21

ADDITIONAL STUDY: "In the darkest days of her long war with evil, the church of God has been given messages of the eternal purpose of God. His people have been permitted to look beyond the trials of the present to the victories of the future, when the war is over and saved people have taken over the promised land. These visions of future glory should be dear to God's church today. The war of the ages is rapidly closing. And God's promised blessings are soon to be fulfilled [kept]. . . .

"The nations of saved people will know no other law than the law of heaven. All will be a happy, united [joined as one] family. They will be clothed with the robes of praise and thanksgiving.

Over the scene the morning stars will sing together. And the sons of God will shout for joy, while God and Christ will unite in announcing, 'There shall be no more sin. And there shall be no more death.' "—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pages 722, 732, 733.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① People have worked hard to make things better in our world. But the world continues to get worse. According to the Bible, only when Christ returns and remakes this world will it become the heaven that we wish for. We know this truth. But why is it still our duty to bring as much comfort, healing, and peace to this world as we can?
- ② Thursday's study pointed out the important fact that many Old Testament prophecies talk about the coming of Jesus as one event, not two. What does that tell us about how closely related the First and Second Comings are? Why is that so? Why is it that without the First Coming there could be no Second? And why—without the Second Coming—would the First Coming be meaningless?
- ③ What can we learn from the study of Zechariah that can help us to be prepared for the outpouring (pouring out) of the Holy Spirit?