



Zechariah - Chapter Ten

II.a [Zechariah 9:1-11:17 - The First Oracle: Leaders and their People \(continues\)](#)

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Summary of Chapter Ten

This is a call to prayer to God, as contrasted with the idol-worship which had brought judgements on the princes and people. These are the blessings promised in answer to prayer: God's people will be rulers of themselves; there will be conquest over their enemies; there will be restoration and establishment of both Israel and Judah in their own land in peace and piety.

II.a.ii [Zechariah 10:1-11:3 - Restoration of Judah and Israel](#)

In this section Zechariah uses the image of Judah's leaders as shepherds; the current leaders are unfaithful and greedy, and God must rescue his people from them.

II.a.ii.1 [Zechariah 10:1-5 - Judgement on Judah's Shepherds](#)

Those who currently lead Judah lead them astray, and must be replaced.

¹ Ask rain from the Lord
in the season of the spring rain,
from the Lord who makes the storm-clouds,
who gives showers of rain to you,
the vegetation in the field to everyone.

Zechariah 10:1

Ask rain from the Lord in the season of the spring rain. Ancient Israel had no irrigation system, and relied on rain to water their crops. In a time of drought, nothing grew, so Israel relied on both the autumn and the spring rains: *<<I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit>>* (Leviticus 26:4), *<<From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work>>* (Psalm 104:13), and: *<<He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth; he makes lightnings for the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses>>* (Psalm 135:7).

In view of the Lord's promise to provide the grain and new wine for his people (9:17), they should look to him in faith for rain. The Israelite agricultural economy was dependent on rain for its success, especially the spring rain. Since pagan gods such as Baal also claimed to make the storm-clouds that controlled the rainfall, a crucial test of Israel's faithfulness to the Lord was 'from whom would they seek the rain?' God used Elijah to produce one of the severest droughts that came upon the land during the reign of one of its most wicked kings, Ahab: *<<Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth>>* (James 5:17).

The vegetation in the field to everyone. In man's ideas of equality, often everyone ends up equally poor. God's idea of equality means abundance for everyone. Jesus later explains that God in fact provides for everyone: *<<for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous>>* (Matthew 5:45b). Paul added his authority to this on his first visit to Lystra: *<<In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good – giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy>>* (Acts 14:16-17).

² For the teraphim utter nonsense,
and the diviners see lies;
the dreamers tell false dreams,
and give empty consolation.
Therefore the people wander like sheep;
they suffer for lack of a shepherd.

Zechariah 10:2

In the past, the leaders sought help from the teraphim or household gods, like those that Jacob's wife Rachel stole from her father Laban (Genesis 31:34), or

from pagan diviners. Yet these sources had yielded only empty consolation, and the people had been left leaderless, like sheep without a shepherd. The people had listened to false and deceptive leaders, and part of the reason was because there was a lack of godly leadership in Israel, a situation that God condemns: *<<Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the Lord>>* (Jeremiah 23:1).

³ My anger is hot against the shepherds,
and I will punish the leaders;
for the Lord of hosts cares for his flock, the house of Judah,
and will make them like his proud warhorse.

Zechariah 10:3

The Lord's anger was kindled against the leaders of his people, described as the shepherds and 'male goats' (Jeremiah 50:8), an image of abusive power; refer to Ezekiel Chapter 34. As a result, he would remove them and provide a new shepherd for his flock. David saw God as his shepherd: *<<The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake>>* (Psalm 23:1-3), a role taken up by his Son, Jesus: *<<I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd>>* (John 10:14-16).

The Lord of hosts will make them like his proud warhorse. In mercy God will take his people and transform them from a flock of sheep to a herd of war horses, ready for battle. All of them shall be like mighty men and defeat their enemies.

⁴ Out of them shall come the cornerstone,
out of them the tent-peg,
out of them the battle-bow,
out of them every commander.

⁵ Together they shall be like warriors in battle,
trampling the foe in the mud of the streets;
they shall fight, for the Lord is with them,
and they shall put to shame the riders on horses.

Zechariah 10:4-5

The flock would be transformed from wandering sheep into a majestic warhorse, while the new leadership that the Lord would provide for them is described metaphorically as the cornerstone, i.e. the foundation around which a building was constructed: <<*therefore thus says the Lord God, See, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: 'One who trusts will not panic'*>> (Isaiah 28:16); as a tent peg, an image of solid stability: <<*On that day I will call my servant Eliakim son of Hilkiah, and will clothe him with your robe and bind your sash on him. I will commit your authority to his hand, and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open. I will fasten him like a peg in a secure place, and he will become a throne of honour to his ancestral house*>> (Isaiah 22:20-23); and as a battle-bow, representing military power: <<*He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the warhorse from Jerusalem; and the battle-bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth*>> (Zechariah 9:10). These images have royal associations, but the renovation of leadership extends down to the lower level of overseer or commander (9:8), where these were Israel's oppressors. These new leaders would be triumphant against all foes because of the Lord's presence with them.

It is easy to draw similarities with what God wanted from his leaders and what Jesus offers as the supreme leader:

- Jesus is the cornerstone: the foundation, measure, and standard (Psalm 118:22-23, Isaiah 28:16, Matthew 21:42, Acts 4:11 and 1 Peter 2:4-5).
- Jesus is the tent peg: holding all things securely (Isaiah 22:23-24).
- Jesus is the battle-bow: a strong fighter for good (Isaiah 63:1-4 and Revelation 19:11-16).
- Jesus is the leader over every ruler of his people (Revelation 19:16).

Together they shall be like warriors in battle, trampling the foe in the mud of the streets. This imagery draws of the great days of Israel when David led them in battle: <<*I beat them fine like the dust of the earth, I crushed them and stamped them down like the mire of the streets*>> (2 Samuel 22:43), a time that God promises will come again: <<*Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, 'Where is the Lord your God?' My eyes will see her downfall; now she will be trodden down like the mire of the streets*>> (Micah 7:10).

They shall fight, for the Lord is with them, and they shall put to shame the riders on horses. Here is further confirmation that God intends to call his people

out of the nations, here referring to the Diaspora but equally applying to all who come to him under the new covenant: <<*those who handle the bow shall not stand, and those who are swift of foot shall not save themselves, nor shall those who ride horses save their lives*>> (Amos 2:15), <<*And among the nations the remnant of Jacob, surrounded by many peoples, shall be like a lion among the animals of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, with no one to deliver*>> (Micah 5:8), and: <<*Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders; and the horses and their riders shall fall, every one by the sword of a comrade*>> (Haggai 2:21-22).

II.a.ii.2 Zechariah 10:6-12 - The Restoration of the Flock

God will care for the remnant of both Judah and Ephraim, restoring them as his people after the exile.

⁶ I will strengthen the house of Judah,
and I will save the house of Joseph.
I will bring them back because I have compassion on them,
and they shall be as though I had not rejected them;
for I am the Lord their God and I will answer them.

Zechariah 10:6

I will strengthen the house of Judah. The promise from the preceding passage is repeated more intensely. God will save and bless Israel, and have mercy on them. God has strength for Christians also. Paul tells them that they can draw on his resources for strength: <<*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power*>> (Ephesians 6:10).

The Lord's intervention for his people will result in their strengthening and deliverance. Whereas they were once like sheep without a shepherd, rejected by the Lord, he will now have compassion on them, completing the process of restoration begun when he brought Judah back from exile. This restoration will extend beyond Judah to include the house of Joseph, referring to the Northern Kingdom of Israel that is often referred to after Joseph's second son Ephraim, which was scattered by the Assyrians in 722 BC. When these people cry out to him in exile, he will answer them and bring them home, resulting in strength and joy for all of God's people. The process of restoration is captured in a future view of the Messiah: <<*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his*

wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all>> (Isaiah 53:5-6 NIVUK).

7 Then the people of Ephraim shall become like warriors,
and their hearts shall be glad as with wine.
Their children shall see it and rejoice,
their hearts shall exult in the Lord.

Zechariah 10:7

Ephraim, as one of the most prominent and centrally located tribes, is named here as standing for the entire Northern Kingdom. Its patriarch received the prominent right-hand of blessing from his grandfather Jacob ahead of Joseph's firstborn son Manasseh, and thus received the rights of a firstborn son: <<*So he blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel will invoke blessings, saying, "God make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh."*>> So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh>> (Genesis 48:20).

Their children shall see it and rejoice, their hearts shall exult in the Lord. The Lord will not only return strength to Israel, but also joy. Their sense of defeat and weakness will be replaced with gladness.

8 I will signal for them and gather them in,
for I have redeemed them,
and they shall be as numerous as they were before.
9 Though I scattered them among the nations,
yet in far countries they shall remember me,
and they shall rear their children and return.
10 I will bring them home from the land of Egypt,
and gather them from Assyria;
I will bring them to the land of Gilead and to Lebanon,
until there is no room for them.
11 They shall pass through the sea of distress,
and the waves of the sea shall be struck down,
and all the depths of the Nile dried up.

The pride of Assyria shall be laid low,
and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart.

¹² I will make them strong in the Lord,
and they shall walk in his name,
says the Lord.

Zechariah 10:8-12

I will signal for them and gather them in. Just as a shepherd whistles for his flock, the Lord will whistle for his people, bringing them back from the nations where he scattered them: <<*My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me*>> (John 10:27). Earlier, he used the same signal to summon Egypt and Assyria to judge Israel: <<*He will raise a signal for a nation far away, and whistle for a people at the ends of the earth; Here they come, swiftly, speedily!*>> (Isaiah 5:26), and: <<*On that day the Lord will whistle for the fly that is at the sources of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria*>> (Isaiah 7:18). Now it will be the signal for their restoration. This involves a second exodus, in which the Lord will pass through the sea of distress and strike down the waves of the sea, representing all the forces of chaos arrayed against God's people. The Lord will also gather his people from their more recent adversary, Assyria, bringing their bondage to an end.

During the 20th Century many Jewish people were gathered back to the land of Israel, and in 1948 Israel became a nation again after more than 2,000 years of not being a nation. Does the 20th Century gathering of Israel fulfil this prophecy? It fulfils it in part, but only in part, because Israel will be gathered again in belief, not in rejection of the Lord and his saviour. The gathering began in unbelief, but will end up in belief and trust in Jesus.

Egypt and Assyria are geographical opposites, with Egypt as the major military threat to the south of Israel and Assyria to the north. Both of these historical adversaries will be laid low by the Lord, when he restores his people to himself and brings them to the historical centres of fertility, Gilead and Lebanon.

I will make them strong in the Lord, and they shall walk in his name. When God gathers Israel and defeats their enemies they shall walk in freedom and liberty again. It will be like a new exodus from Egypt, complete with exodus-like miracles.