

Heaven’s Best Gift (Zechariah)



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Zechariah 8, Zech. 9:9, Matt. 21:9, Zech. 12:1–10, John 19:37, Zech. 13:7–9, Zechariah 14.*

Memory Text: “The LORD their God will save them on that day as the flock of his people. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown” (*Zechariah 9:16, NIV*).

Key Thought: Zechariah has some wonderful Messianic prophecies that point to Jesus and affirm our faith in Him.

At the heart of the biblical message lies the most beautiful story ever told, that of the Creator God, who, in the person of His Son, left the glory of heaven to save humanity from sin and death. In the second half of Zechariah there are several Messianic prophecies—Old Testament prophetic promises about Jesus—the One who did all this for us.

These specific promises first were given in order to keep God’s people, who lived in Zechariah’s perilous times, focused on the promise of redemption. Although the original context of these prophecies never should be ignored, their importance never should be confined to the past fulfillments either. Instead, we will look at the ways in which they were fulfilled in Jesus—fulfillments that are universal, not local, because they affect the ultimate destiny of the world and not just ancient Israel and Judah.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 22.*

“The Robe of a Jew”

Beginning with chapter 8, the book of Zechariah takes a radical turn. A series of messages sent from the Lord tells the future of the world and the role of God’s people in it. Some of the passages from these chapters are not easy to understand, but the ultimate future is clearly positive.

Read Zechariah 8. What principles can you learn from there that have relevance for us, as Seventh-day Adventists, and for the calling from God that we have been given?

God’s plan was that Jerusalem would again be a safe place in which old people would sit in streets filled with playful boys and girls (*Zech. 8:4, 5*). To those who inhabited a city overrun by conquerors, the promise of streets that were safe for young and old sounded like a dream.

Instead of remaining forever a small subordinate nation, God’s people were to be a magnet to which nations would be drawn in order to worship the Lord, the King of the whole earth (*Zech. 14:9*). The use of the expression “all languages” (*NIV*) in Zechariah 8:23 indicates that the prophecy envisioned a universal movement.

Like Isaiah (*Isaiah 2*) and Isaiah’s contemporary Micah (*Micah 4*), Zechariah was shown by God that the day would come when a multitude of people from many cities and nations would go up to Jerusalem to pray and seek the Lord. God’s presence in Zion generally will be recognized, as will His blessings on those who worship Him.

The gospel accounts tell that these Messianic promises began to be fulfilled through the ministry of Jesus Christ. On one occasion, for example, Jesus said that when He is lifted up from the earth, He “will draw all peoples” to Himself (*John 12:32, NKJV*).

The church of Christ, also called the “Israel of God” (*Gal. 6:16*), is privileged in our time to have a part in this mission. We are to carry the light of salvation to the ends of the earth. In this way the people of God can be a great blessing to the world.

Read especially Zechariah 8:16, 17. At a time when our church is seeking revival and reformation, how can we learn to avoid these things, which God says He *hates*?

The King of Peace

Read Zechariah 9:9. How does the New Testament apply this to Jesus? See Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:9, 10; Luke 19:38; John 12:13–15.

Jesus' triumphal entry consisted of the future King riding on a donkey into Jerusalem. In the Bible, rejoicing and shouting for joy especially is associated with the celebration of God as King (*Psalms 47, 96, 98*). This gentle Ruler will bring righteousness, salvation, and lasting peace, and His dominion will stretch to the ends of the earth.

When Jesus triumphantly rode a donkey into Jerusalem only days before His death, a great number of people cheered His coming. Some rejoiced, hoping that Christ would overthrow Rome's power and establish God's kingdom in Jerusalem. But instead of allowing Himself to be Israel's king, Jesus died on the cross and then rose from His grave. There is no question that He disappointed many of His followers, who sought a more militaristic leader. Little did they know, however, that what they wanted was nothing in comparison to what they were going to get through the death of Jesus instead.

“Christ was following the Jewish custom for a royal entry. The animal on which He rode was that ridden by the kings of Israel, and prophecy had foretold that thus the Messiah should come to His kingdom. No sooner was He seated upon the colt than a loud shout of triumph rent the air. The multitude hailed Him as Messiah, their King. Jesus now accepted the homage which He had never before permitted, and the disciples received this as proof that their glad hopes were to be realized by seeing Him established on the throne. The multitude were convinced that the hour of their emancipation was at hand.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 570.

Much has been written about how, when things looked good, the crowd was enthusiastic about Jesus; when things did not go right, however, many in that same crowd turned away from Him (some even openly against Him). What can we learn from this event about the danger of false expectations? You claim a promise for healing, for instance, or for victory over a sin, and you do not see it as you expected. How can we develop a faith that will not fail, even when things do not go as hoped, expected, or even prayed for?

The One Pierced

Zechariah 12–14 reveal several things that could have happened had Israel been faithful to God. First, the Lord would have brought total victory over the powers of evil and the hostile nations that had tried to oppose His plan of salvation (*Zech. 12:1–9*). Although Jerusalem was to be God’s instrument toward this triumph, the victory itself would have come from the Lord’s intervention. In the end, the enemy utterly would have been defeated and destroyed.

Zechariah 12:10 marks the transition of the movement from physical deliverance, from what would have happened had Israel been faithful, to spiritual deliverance of God’s faithful people. Following the victory, God’s people would embrace their Lord. God’s Spirit of grace and supplication would be poured on the leaders and the people. This convicting work of the Spirit would result in far-reaching repentance and spiritual revival, something that our church itself is seeking.

As God pours out His Spirit, His people look upon the One whom they have pierced 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 violence, usually resulting in death (*Num. 25:8, 1 Sam. 31:4*). The poignancy of the people’s grief is heightened by the realization that their own sins caused Jesus Christ’s death.

Read Zechariah 12:10. How did the apostle John connect this passage with Christ’s crucifixion and His second coming? See *John 19:37, Rev. 1:7*.

Interestingly enough, one traditional Jewish interpretation holds that this verse points to the experience of the Messiah. It is, of course, right: it is talking about Jesus and His death on the cross (*compare with Isaiah 53*).

“The scenes of Calvary call for the deepest emotion. Upon this subject you will be excusable if you manifest enthusiasm. That Christ, so excellent, so innocent, should suffer such a painful death, bearing the weight of the sins of the world, our thoughts and imaginations can never fully comprehend.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 213. How can you grow in your appreciation of what His death means to you and what it offers you?

The Good Shepherd

For centuries both Jewish and Christian readers of the Bible have found in Zechariah’s book numerous references to the Messiah and messianic times. Christians, of course, have understood that these passages apply to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ: the triumphant yet peaceful King (*Zech. 9:9*), the One who was pierced (*Zech. 12:10*), the Shepherd who was struck down (*Zech. 13:7*).

In Zechariah 13:7–9 the prophet is shown a scene in which the sword of the Lord’s judgment goes out against the Good Shepherd. On a previous occasion the prophet saw the sword being raised against a “worthless shepherd” (*Zech. 11:17, NIV*). But here in this passage the Good Shepherd is struck, and the flock becomes scattered. His death results in a great trial and testing of God’s people, during which some perish; yet, all of the faithful are refined.

Read Matthew 26:31 and Mark 14:27. How did Jesus apply this prophecy to that which was going to happen that night? More important, what should that whole incident, that of the disciples fleeing in the face of adversity (see *Matt. 26:56* and *Mark 14:50*), teach us about the faithfulness of God in contrast to human unfaithfulness?

The image of God as a shepherd is found in many places in the Bible. It begins with the book of Genesis (*Gen. 48:15, NIV*) and ends with Revelation (*Rev. 7:17*). Through Ezekiel, God rebuked the irresponsible shepherds of His people and promised to search for the lost sheep and take care of them. Applying these words to Himself, Jesus declared that He is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (*John 10:11*).

Think of times in which you have been unfaithful to the Lord. Despite that, how does He continue to show you mercy and grace? What must your response be to that mercy and grace?

King of the Whole World

Read Zechariah 14. How are we to understand that which is being said there?

In the last chapter of his book, Zechariah describes a day when all unrepentant nations will gather themselves against Jerusalem. At the last moment, the Lord will intervene by liberating His people and establishing His eternal kingdom on earth. After all who oppose Him are destroyed, all nations will worship the one true God. Then, the Lord will be king over the whole world. He will be one Lord, and His name will be exalted above all names. The great “I AM” expresses all God is and always will be. Though these things were to have happened had Israel remained faithful, they still will be fulfilled but on a grander scale, during the final redemption of God’s people everywhere.

When Zechariah announced the coming of the Messiah, he did not draw a line of separation between His first and second comings. As was the case with other prophets, he saw the coming kingdom of the Messiah as one glorious future. Only in the light of Christ’s first coming can we now distinguish between the two comings. We also can feel gratitude for everything He accomplished for our salvation on Calvary. We can look forward with joy in anticipation of God’s eternal kingdom (*see Dan. 7:14*).

The closing section of this prophetic book describes Jerusalem in its glory, exalted, filled with people, and secure. The saved from all nations will participate in the worship of the eternal King. The entire city of Jerusalem will be filled with the holiness of the temple.

When these glorious promises are studied together with the overall teaching of the Bible, we come to the conclusion that the ultimate fulfillment of these predictions will take place in the New Jerusalem, where God’s people will come together from everywhere and worship Him forever. This all will happen only after the second coming of Jesus. The themes of the people’s perpetual praises will be God’s salvation as well as His goodness and power, just as the famous Song of the Sea concludes: “The LORD shall reign forever and ever” (*Exod. 15:18, NKJV*). Ancient prophets and faithful people from the past all looked with eager anticipation toward this climactic event.

Dwell on the ultimate redemption that is promised to us—a new heaven and a new earth with no sin, death, suffering, or loss. What are all the reasons you have for this hope, and how can you keep them before you daily, especially in times of trouble, fear, and pain?

Further Study: “In the darkest days of her long conflict with evil, the church of God has been given revelations of the eternal purpose of Jehovah. His people have been permitted to look beyond the trials of the present to the triumphs of the future, when, the warfare having been accomplished, the redeemed will enter into possession of the promised land. These visions of future glory, scenes pictured by the hand of God, should be dear to His church today, when the controversy of the ages is rapidly closing and the promised blessings are soon to be realized in all their fullness. . . .

“The nations of the saved will know no other law than the law of heaven. All will be a happy, united family, clothed with the garments 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 proclaiming, ‘There shall be no more sin, neither shall there be any more death.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 722, 732, 733.

Discussion Questions:

- ① However much humans have strived to make things better in our world, the world continues to get worse. According to the Bible, only when Christ returns and remakes this world will it be the paradise that we so long for. Though we know this truth, why are we still called to bring as much comfort, healing, and solace to this world as we possibly can?
- ② Thursday’s study pointed out the important fact that many Old Testament prophecies about the coming of Jesus talk about it in ways that seem to refer to one event, not two. What does that tell us about how closely related the First and Second Comings are, in terms of the plan of salvation? 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 be of no avail?
- ③ As we seek for revival and reformation among us, what can we learn from the study of Zechariah that can help us, both individually and as a church, to be prepared for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which is vital to the revival and reformation we so earnestly need?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Zechariah 9:16*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Understand that sending the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to earth is God's supreme gift to humanity.

Feel: Trust that Messianic prophecies demonstrate that God cares about our situation and gives the ultimate solution to the problem of sin.

Do: Cultivate faith in the Messiah who voluntarily came and saved humanity, even though it caused His suffering and death.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: The Certainty of Messianic Prophecies

A What do different titles given for the Messiah and the scenes from His life tell you about His accomplishments?

B What do the predictions of the Messiah's first coming have in common with our readiness for His second coming?

C What does it mean that God's people will sparkle in God's hand as do jewels in a crown?

II. Feel: Pierced for You

A What emotions fill you when you realize that Someone suffered and died for you so you might have life?

B What would happen if our Redeemer, the Messiah, had not come?

III. Do: Cultivate Faith in Jesus Christ

A How can you practically help others to develop deep emotions for Christ while studying the scenes of Calvary?

B How can you personally grow in your own faith in Jesus?

► **Summary:** Jesus Christ came at the precise time in order to save those who believe in Him. This is the greatest story and most decisive event in the cosmic history of our world, and our future destiny depends upon our relationship to the Messiah who came and is yet to come again.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *Zechariah 12:10*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: Knowing Christ personally is vital for our spiritual lives. The fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies related to the first coming of Jesus gives us assurance that He will come again. Without this hope of the second coming of Jesus Christ, life would make no sense. Faith and trust in Jesus result in eternal life (*John 17:3*).

Just for Teachers: The last part of the book of Zechariah (*Zechariah 9–14*) is usually categorized as eschatological or apocalyptic, which means that the prophecies focus on the time of the end. The last days were inaugurated by the first coming of Jesus (*Heb. 1:1, 2; Acts 2:17; 1 Pet. 1:20; 4:7; 2 Pet. 3:3*) but climax with the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Prophet Zechariah presents profound Messianic predictions, and the Gospel writers apply some of them directly to the life of Jesus Christ.

Opening Discussion: Contemplate, as a class, the meaning of the following thought: hope is vital in a situation that seems hopeless.

- Why is it important for people to have hope? Share concrete examples of how hope helped someone to survive in a time of crisis.
- What happens when sick people or war prisoners lose hope? Why are Christians a hope-oriented people?

► **STEP 2**—Explore

Bible Commentary

I. Seven Messianic Prophecies in the Book of Zechariah

Though Zechariah's Messianic prophecies can be challenging and sometimes enigmatic, the main thrust is clear: Christ is coming. It is interesting, though, that the prophets Isaiah and Zechariah have more to say about the coming Messiah than any other Old Testament prophets.

1. The First Messianic Prophecy (*Review Zechariah 3:8, 9 with your class.*)

Three stunning titles for the Messiah appear in this passage (the prophet

Isaiah has already mentioned them). The Messiah is called “ ‘ “My [God’s] Servant” ’ ” (vs. 8, *NKJV*; see also *Isaiah 42, 49, 50, 52, 53*), “ ‘ “the BRANCH” ’ ” (vs. 8; see also *Isa. 4:2*), and “ ‘ “the stone” ’ ” (vs. 9; see also *Isa. 28:16*), but this time a unique description is added: the Stone has seven eyes and an inscription is engraved on it (vs. 9). Later, the Messiah also removes sin and cleanses people. The vision concludes with a picture of security, peace, and happiness in which people enjoy a fellowship together because the Messiah reigns (vs. 10).

2. The Second Messianic Prophecy (*Review Zechariah 6:12, 13 with your class.*)

The crowning of the high priest Joshua (vs. 11) is portrayed here as a type for the Messiah. Jesus Christ, the Branch, will be ultimately crowned as the King and be simultaneously the Priest. In Israel these two offices were separate, but the Messiah will combine them in His Person. He Himself will be the King-Priest and rule on His throne. Only Jesus Christ has this unique position; He is the Priest who sits on the throne as the King (see *Psalms 110, Hebrews 7*).

3. The Third Messianic Prophecy (*Review Zechariah 9:9, 10 with your class.*)

Zechariah pictures the Messiah as the righteous and gentle King riding a donkey. The fulfillment is described in *Matthew 21:5* and *John 12:15*, and it is applied to the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on the Sunday of His last week before the Crucifixion.

4. The Fourth Messianic Prophecy (*Review Zechariah 10:4 with your class.*)

Verse 4 begins: “From him,” which raises the question of who is meant by “him.” The best-suited antecedent is the Lord (see vs. 3). This means that the Messiah will come from the Lord, i.e., from the heavenly Father. This very brief Messianic verse presents four marvelous titles for Jesus Christ. He is the “ ‘cornerstone,’ ” i.e., the foundation of everything (see *Ps. 118:22, Isa. 28:16; compare with Matt. 21:42*); He is the “ ‘tent peg,’ ” who fastens us to Him in righteousness and on whom people can hang all their worries, fears, anxiety, and burdens (see *Isa. 22:22, 23*); He is the “ ‘battle-bow,’ ” that is, as the Divine Warrior He is the symbol of strength (*Exod. 15:2, 3; Pss. 7:1; 27:1*); and He is the (absolute or sovereign) “ ‘ruler.’ ” On Him you can rely completely.

5. The Fifth Messianic Prophecy (*Review Zechariah 11:4–14 with your class.*)

In this more difficult passage, the Messiah is depicted as the rejected good

Shepherd whom the Lord asks to tend after the flock. Without going into the details of the complex imagery of this biblical section, verse 12 mentions the phrase “they paid me thirty pieces of silver” (*NIV*) and verse 13 states “so I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter” (*ESV*). Phrases from these verses are used in Matthew 27:3, 6–9 and are applied to both Judas’ betrayal of Jesus Christ for the thirty pieces of silver and to what the chief priests did with the money after Judas threw it back.

6. The Sixth Messianic Prophecy (*Review Zechariah 12:10–14 with your class.*)

Zechariah prophetically states that the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem “ ‘will look on me, the one they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child’ ” (*vs. 10, NIV*). The picture is gloomy: people look at the Messiah and mourn bitterly for Him, because they have pierced Him. This portrait of the Messiah’s death is used in John 19:37 (*compare with Ps. 22:16, Isa. 53:5*). Our need to look on Jesus in faith is underscored in John 3:14, 15 (*compare with Num. 21:9, Isa. 45:22, Heb. 12:2*).

7. The Seventh Messianic Prophecy (*Review Zechariah 13:6–9 with your class.*)

The prophecy concerning the way that the Messiah’s “feet will stand on the Mount of Olives” (*Zech. 14:4, 5, NKJV*) goes beyond the scope of the first coming of Jesus Christ. Even though Jesus Christ walked on the Mount of Olives during His first coming, this prediction proclaims that the Mount of Olives will be split in two. Its fulfillment surpasses even Jesus’ second coming, because at the time of the Second Coming, He will not touch the ground but stay in the air (*1 Thess. 4:16, 17*). The whole scenario best fits His third coming after the millennium when the New Jerusalem will come down and “all the holy ones with him” (*Zech. 14:5, NIV*). Zechariah 14:6–9 then describes the conditions of the new earth (*see Revelation 21, 22*).

Consider This: Ask class members to define in their own words the different titles of Jesus Christ as expressed in the book of Zechariah. What do these titles reveal about Jesus?

II. Hope That Makes You Not Ashamed (*Review Philippians 1:20 with your class.*)

Prophet Zechariah uses a unique expression: “Prisoners of hope” (*Zech. 9:12, NIV*). He is saying that we have hope, but at the same time we are not free; we are prisoners, and we expect future deliverance. We expect a better world that can be established only by Jesus Christ. Hope in the Messiah, the King, brings the ultimate solution to our deep problem of sin and troubles, because He now establishes the kingdom of grace and, later, the kingdom of glory.

Questions for Discussion:

- 1 How do you feel as a “prisoner of hope”? What does this special phrase mean to you?
- 2 What biblical texts give assurance about the second coming of Jesus Christ? Which ones do you know by heart? Share your favorite one with the class.
- 3 The second part of our name, “Seventh-day Adventists,” refers to the blessed hope. How can we be messengers and carriers of this hope for others?

►STEP 3—Apply**Application Questions:**

- 1 There are seven different prophecies about the Messiah in the book of Zechariah. What insights do they provide about the life of Jesus Christ? Which of the episodes of His life that are mentioned in the book of Zechariah are depicted in the New Testament? What difference does it make in our lives that we know how and when these Messianic prophecies of the first coming of Jesus were fulfilled?
- 2 Ask your class to sing the hymn “We Have This Hope” (*Seventh-day Adventist Church Hymnal*, p. 214). What feelings does this song express and create?

►STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Explain to the members of your class how important prayer is as the first step in discovering the meaning of the biblical text. Discuss with them why it is vital.

Activity: Zechariah’s book is one of the most frequently quoted Old Testament books in the New Testament (more than seventy quotations or allusions). Most of them appear in the Gospels and in the book of Revelation. The book of Zechariah is second only to Ezekiel, followed by Daniel, in its influence on Revelation. Encourage your class to find and share in class some of these quotations and allusions from the book of Zechariah in the New Testament.