King and Shepherd

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[0:00] Whoever stood in or near or next to a ruined church building.! All that's left is brick and stone.

! Bells no longer ring.! The roof has fallen in.! Empty pews. The pulpit is silent. The waters of baptism are no longer put across the brow.
The bread and wine of communion are no longer eaten. I suppose you don't have to go far in our own city to see that, do you? Out the door, round the corner, and there is triple Kirk's over there on Union Terrace.
All you see now, an old steeple. Originally built as a free church in 1844. Now just a steeple entombed in what? Student accommodation and offices.
And how does it make you feel when you see that, when you walk down Union Terrace? Or you see a church in ruins. What does it feel like? I don't know about you, but I look back and think, wow, doesn't Christianity look weak?
[1:06] Insignificant. Maybe something of a past generation. When we see ruins and churches that look like stones like that, does it help us want to push on? I'm not sure.

Sometimes I think it can make it harder. And so what causes that? What causes decline and rot? And what can help us then to push on in days of small things where we look around and all looks weak?
And it looks like we're living, if you like, the Christian life in amongst the ruins. Well, first, what causes that? Not just of that church there, but of any church, and not just in Scotland, but of any church across the world?
Well, of course, there can be lots of things. But perhaps we could say there are commonly two main causes. One would be external opposition. People, literally, of a nation turning on the people of God and of his church.
And the pressure ramps up, whether gently or to a great extent, and, well, churches close. Churches are burnt down. Doors are locked. Don't go near there. Pool pits can fall silent, if you like, because of external enemies.
[2:16] You think today of parts of North Korea, parts of India, China, huge amounts of the population of this earth where gospel freedom is restricted or even silenced.

But there's something else, isn't there? Pool pits don't just fall silent when pastors are arrested or imprisoned or killed or churches burnt down, no. Pool pits can fall silent because of what's been preached there from that pool pit over many years and many decades.
Well, it isn't the gospel. It hasn't fed the people of God. If we can put it this way, enemies can come from within. False shepherds, people that look like shepherds but are actually, what, hired hands. People who look like shepherds sound like shepherds but are actually wolves. So it can be today, across this world, external opposition, internal opposition can cause such difficulty and harm for God's people.
So it was in Zechariah's day. These are the issues that the people here are facing 450 years or so before Jesus came.
[3:26] God's people, yes, are back from exile. And yet, the people of God here, life for them is tough. There are challenges. And to kind of boil it down or summarize it, chapter 9, there are enemies outside.

And chapter 10 speaks to enemies, if you like, inside the life of God's people. Now, before turning to those chapters, let's just come to our second question.
Well, what does it make them feel? Well, what have we seen through Zechariah so far? Disappointment, discourage, disillusioned, far from God. What does God call them to do at the start

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of the book?
He says, return to me and I will return to you. But they're in the land, right? Yes, physically where God wants them to be. But their hearts are far from God. And so I suppose the question is, what hope is there?
Is there any hope? Ruin city walls for God's people. Remember, this is before Nehemiah's day, right? The walls aren't there. A temple which wasn't what it used to be.
[4:31] Yes, we're back from exile. But how can we keep going with enemies external and internal? Well, in these two chapters, chapters 9 and 10, God says there's hope.

That he will deliver his people, crushing their enemies and making them safe. Saving them, gathering them in, making life with God. God and his people, all it should be.
And so too for us this evening. These words, these chapters full of gospel hope that God himself will gather his people in. Gather his people in safety.
Rule over them. Shepherd them. Making them free from enemies forever. In other words, the ruins don't have the last word.
Now, these themes cut across kind of both chapters, but we'll take them separately as we start. And we're going to spend a little bit more time on chapter 10. Chapter 11, the theme...
[5:31] Sorry, more time on chapter 9. Chapter 10, the shepherding is picked up again in chapter 11. So our first point is our longest as well. So firstly, our first point this evening. God will deliver his people.

Our enemies will be defeated. We will be safe all through God's King. Chapter 9, verses 1 to 8, says kind of one thing.
God will defeat his enemies. He will defeat the enemies of Israel and Judah. Verse 1 there, his word is against them, against the enemies. But did you notice there, as Daniel read it, how powerful the enemies looked?
Verse 2, Tyre and Sidon, what? Well, they're very wise. They have a rampart. They have a very impressive army. Perhaps we've all seen pictures on TV of Russia or China or great military powers kind of marching their troops and tanks and planes, whatever else, through the cities.
And I don't know about you, but I often look at that and think, wow, that's quite something. It's very impressive, all the men kind of marching in time and all the weapons of war parading behind it.
[6:38] Well, that's Tyre and Sidon. Wow. Wisdom, military might, not only that, wealth. Did you see it? Silver is like dust for them. I don't know how dusty your home is, okay?

But you know what it's like. You put your finger across the top of a photograph or the window ledge or the TV, whatever it is, and it's covered in dust. Imagine silver just like that. Wealthy.
The same with gold. What? It's like mud on the streets, right? It's kind of everywhere, right? Powerful, rich, mighty, wise. These are days where their external enemies of God's people look strong.
Whether it's in that day or today, we look around the world and we look at gospel opposition or opposition to the church, and I don't know about you, but sometimes we can think, oh, does God see? Does God see all of that?
Does he see? Have you ever thought that? I have. Well, gloriously, have you looked at verse 1 and verse 8? God sees. God sees all this. He sees the might of all of these nations here that are listed.
[7:41] He sees it all, and what does God do? Verse 4. He defeats his enemies. And not just Hadrach and Damascus down to Sidon. No, verse 5. Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron.

These are running, for those of you who love maps, kind of north to south, all the way down there. All the way down there from the top of Palestine, right down. All these nations, Athod, Philistia, right?
They're all defeated. Verse 5. They are confined. And why? Well, there's a long history all through the Old Testament with these nations, but we see it in verse 7.
Why? Philistia has blood in its mouth, abominations between its teeth. They are enemies of God, participating in false and blasphemous worship, a threat to God's people.
They are God's. Enemies. Now, one of the ways prophecy works in the Old Testament is that kind of timescales and layers, if you like, of fulfillment are all part of how we're going to understand it.
[8:40] And the kind of general New Testament principle here is that God will defeat those who oppose his church, his people. But is there a specific fulfillment of these verses here?

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A specific historical fulfillment? Yes. About 100 years or so after these words, Alexander the Great swept down through each of these towns in this order, destroying them north to south, bringing destruction.
You see, verse 1 to 8, God sees all, but not only that, God can use all. Alexander the Great, what an instrument upon in the hands of God.
But of course, the victory is what? He's the Lord. The victory is the Lord's, verses 7 and 8. Yes, the Lord is orchestrating all this. It's his victory as he sees all and uses all.
God will judge his enemies. Not many of us here today have faced violent persecution, physical threat because we're Christians.
[9:45] Some of us have, or some of us know people that have. But God promises a day where those external enemies will all be defeated.

For our brothers and sisters in countries of real persecution, the immediacy of this good news will be felt daily, right? But for all of us here too, we must be glad that one day no external threat will overcome or will come up against God's church ever again.
As Joe reminded us this morning, as we thought about this morning, there is no promise that we won't have real external opposition, serious opposition in this country.
But what there is a promise of is if that ever came, or wherever it is, that we stand assured of God's victory. I was speaking with one of my boys this week about the election and elections in all kinds of different countries.
And I guess we had a bit of a meandering conversation about voting and party and all this kind of stuff and what it's like in different countries for Christians and all of this. But eventually the question came, is there anyone in this election wanting to stop Christians?
[11:05] Is there anyone in this election this past Thursday wanting to stop Christians? I told him no. But there are certainly individuals standing who even indirectly, because of what they believe and want to do, will make life harder for Christians, for God's people.

And he said this, well, why would they want to do that? Because Christians will just go on preaching anyway. And I said, absolutely, that's right, amen, they certainly will.
What a folly it is to stand against a God who will wipe away his enemies. But some do stand, and sometimes churches are silenced, as pastors are arrested or killed.
But of the church of Jesus Christ, friends, there will be no end. And I think for God's people here in Zechariah's day, as for us now, we are to take heart and confidence of the power of God, that nothing will overcome God and his church.
So after verses 1 to 8 here, we arrive in verse 9, and we get something kind of expected and something unexpected. The expected part of this is the news of victory being told in Jerusalem.
[12:14] If there's been this victory of enemies, it's going to be told in the newspapers and the TV stations and on the radios and all of that. It's going to be announced and heralded. This is commonplace in the ancient world, and it's true now through all our media, right?

Victory, we're going to tell people. And if you just had verse 9, we'd think, of course, ah, right, verse 9, rejoice, behold. Oh, it's looking back to the victories of verses 1 to 8.
But here's the surprise. They are to rejoice, but what does it go on to say? They're to rejoice because their king is coming. Verse 9, rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion.
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. Oh, it doesn't go back and rehearse all the victories. No, it says, behold, your king is coming to you, righteous and having salvation as he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
They are to rejoice because the coming of the king. Now, there's a few surprising things here. Given the context of military might and power and victory, there's a few things surprising here about this king.
[13:23] Just notice them with me. First, notice something we're seeing about his identity. Verse 5 to 8, God is speaking in the first person. Verse 10 to 13, we go back to the first person again.

So when the king arrives, what are we expecting? We're expecting God. Do you see how closely God and the king are going to be identified? First person, first person, the king comes back to God. There's something here of God and this king. Secondly, look at what the king arrives on. In the context of all this talk of victory and power and might, what is the king riding on?
He's riding on a donkey. Now, is a donkey the kind of Old Testament equivalent of the president of the United States? I think they call the car the beast. Is that right? Is that what they call it?

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Kind of projection of power. You've seen the motorcade. Maybe some of you saw it last year when he arrived in Scotland. Massive kind of bulletproofed car and all these different vehicles on either side. It is a donkey in the Old Testament, the equivalent of that.
[14:25] Of a kind of aircraft carrier, the central piece, the most powerful picture of might, right? No. A donkey in these days is like it would be today, right?

A donkey. It's not arriving on a war horse. No. No. Humble. Even weak. And what's he like? Again, think of the context of all that we've just had.
What's he like? Righteous and having salvation. Humble, it says. How many of Judah's kings does that perfectly describe?
Remember in these days that there is no king. God has promised one to be on the throne forever, but there isn't one there seated on the throne at that time. But how many of the former ones does this describe?
Well, not many. Fourthly, do you notice what this king or God through this king is going to do? Verse 10. This king will, what?
[15:24] Cut off the chariot and war horse. Ephraim, that is Israel. He'll cut off the chariot and war horse from Ephraim. He puts away the bow. He shall speak peace.

It's surprising, isn't it? We've had military might and conquest. And the war horse is to be put away. Connected to that, what's coming out of his mouth? He's speaking peace to the nations.
We've had war. He's going to speak peace. What else is he going to do? Verse 11. He's going to set prisoners free from the waterless pit. And what is a waterless pit?
It's kind of a death sentence, right? A pit you can't climb out of with no water. There you are to die. And he's going to free those. Lastly, note with me, how far is this king's going to rule going to go? He's on a donkey. He comes humbly. Look how he's described. But how far will his rule go? Verse 11. In days when we feel like we're standing in ruins and rubble and coming under threat, how amazing to know that for them, a king is coming to God's people who will reign over all, every square inch, who is humble and able to save.
[16:45] Indeed, it seems, can save from the very cause of death. So friends, is there a king like this? Perhaps I don't even need to ask, but we know that there is. This is the Lord Jesus, of course, the king, riding into Jerusalem on a donkey to save his people from their sin.

Now, I think the question is, how does all of this that we've just seen described about the Lord Jesus, this king, and all that he is and all that he's going to do, how does it tie with one in eight? I thought God was going to work military might in victory in crushing enemies, and he does.
But here, this king and the way he saves speak to a different kind of victory over a different kind of enemy, because it's a victory born not by another's blood, shedding another's blood, no, but shedding his own.
Verse 11. As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.
Can you see it? That the rule and reign of this king on the donkey is not established by the shedding of others' blood in the theater of war.
[18:05] The freedom this king brings isn't brought through bows and arrows and chariots, but by the shedding of his own blood in his covenant with his people, the blood of the covenant on the lowliest place.

Of course, as we know, the Lord Jesus, as he rode into Jerusalem, it would be shed at the end of that week on the cross. You see, all the way through the Old Testament, and we're very, very near the end of it here, aren't we?
All the way through the Old Testament, here, almost at the end, God has been teaching his people that at the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.
They don't just need victories from external threats, nations around them crushed. No, they need a king who will come low in righteousness, perfect righteousness, in humility to do what?
To stoop down and save them through his faithfulness, to save them from their sin. And so the hope for all Christians today, for persecuted Christians today, but for all of us, hope for all of us, when we're opposed, even are sidelined at work or at school, is that this king has come on a donkey stooping low to save us from our greatest need, our sin.
[19:21] Last week, I went to the Naval Museum in Greenwich in London, and they had a whole exhibition about Admiral Lord Nelson, who won at the Battle of Trafalgar.

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And Nelson died in the battle. But in the exhibition, which I still think I'm kind of processing that they would do this, but there we are. You go around a little corner, and there they have, in a display cabinet, is some of the clothes that Lord Nelson was wearing when he died, still kind of stained in blood.
It feels like it was a little bit grim to see it, okay? But there you are, around the corner. There it is right there, part of the exhibition. There was his blood soaked as there was victory there in that battle.
Jesus shed his blood for victory, but not a naval battle, and not as an unplanned casualty of war. No, Jesus came decidedly, planned from before the foundation of the world, humbly riding on a donkey, God's king, to shed his blood, the blood of the covenant, that we might go free.
The blood of a covenant, a blood soaking our victory, that he would bring salvation. In Zechariah's day, all of this was in front of them.
[20:39] For us, standing here this evening, one to nine are behind, but you can see this little section towards the end, verse 14. They've kind of started, but they're fully still to come, to look forward to a day of God making his people fully safe.

Yes, Jesus has come. The king has come, and the king is coming. And in those verses there, you see, especially verse 16, God will make his people safe. The day of the Lord is before us.
But what I want to focus on is how God describes his people after this. Do you see it? Enemies defeated. Verse 16, people safe, but not only safe.
How does God go on to describe his people? He'll make them like jewels on a crown. They shall shine on his land. It's a glorious picture, isn't it?
Do you know that this evening, that God is making you, is making each of us here who belong to the Lord Jesus, all his people, to shine like a jewel on the land.
[21:39] Verse 17 is the promise of all made new, of food and wine, of feasting and life, of light shining for all God's people. Maybe the church doesn't feel like it's such a shining bright light now.

Judah didn't back then. Churches now where spires are entombed in offices or some churches as casinos or restaurants or wherever they are.
But God is working to purify his bride and bring a reign of perfect peace and rule across all the world. That is where we arrive at the end of chapter 9.
God's people safe, shining gloriously to the ends of the earth. And so what's our response to all this? Well, surely it's to heed the call of verse 9, to rejoice.
To rejoice that our King has come and that our King is coming. Coming in peace, to make peace between man and God, to save total victory through the King who rules our hearts and is bringing a reign of peace and a world where there'll be no more ruined churches, no more enemies, and we'll be with God forever.
[22:52] But the Lord also promises here a delivery from internal enemies. Yes, external enemies defeated. Yes, the King will come. Yes, God's people will be safe with him, but there are also the threat of internal enemies.

He would not lead his people to God, but from him. And that's our second point and briefer this evening. The Lord will deliver his people. False shepherds will be punished.
We will be gathered all through the shepherd. Chapter 10. Chapter 10 opens with an invitation for Judah, God's people, to cry out in dependence on God.
From whom should they seek reign? Chapter 9.17 promises grain and good vineyard, wine for all. So will they turn to God for that?
Will they anticipate the coming of the King? Will they look to God to provide? And the answer is likely they're not, or likely their leaders aren't leading them to do it.
[23:51] And so God asks them, will you turn? Will you turn? And here's what he goes on to say. For the household gods utter nonsense and the diviners see lies.

They tell false dreams and give empty consolation. Therefore, the people wander like sheep. They are afflicted for lack of a shepherd. My anger is hot against the shepherds and I will punish the leaders.
Do you see a bit of what's going on here? God has great promises to come and send a king and to restore. But he says, will you turn to me?
Will you come? Well, the shepherds in this day clearly aren't leading his people to him. No, there are what? There are false gods, household gods. There are those of false dreams, empty

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consolation.
And therefore, what? The people are wandering for lack of a shepherd. The leaders, the shepherds, the under-shepherds of God's people are not turning his people to him.
[24:51] We were flying last week when we went down to London and the stewards and stewardesses gave their usual safety instructions before the plane took off. And as usual, not all that much attention is being paid to them.

But imagine you're in an emergency on a plane. And imagine you look up. You haven't really paid that much attention at the start. But they know where the exits are, of course. They're the stewards, the stewardesses. They work on the plane.
But as the emergency happens and whatever else, whatever's going on, they don't point you there. How awful would that be? They know how to get off the plane. They know where the emergency Xs are.
They know where to get on the slides and come off or whatever else. But imagine on this plane, the stewards and stewardesses, they don't point you there. No, they point you the wrong way, to the dead end, to where the problem, where the fire is.
How awful. How awful. Well, here are God's people with shepherds who are afflicted in them. Why? Because they're leaving them to false gods, not to the true God.
[25:46] And so God wants to say to them, that is wrong. These shepherds should not be doing that. And I will come as a shepherd to you. I'm not going to say too much more about the false shepherds.

We're going to get more of that in chapter 11. But what do they need? What do they need, given the lack of shepherding and care and teaching that they are getting? Well, what do they need?
Verse 3, for God to punish, yes. But also they need a true shepherd who will come to his flock.
Verse 3, one who cares for his flock.
They need a true shepherd. Those are great words there, aren't they? In verse 3, that God cares for his people. Do you know the heart of God this evening? We've just spoken about our king who is humble.
And what do we see here? A shepherd who cares for his flock. The humble king, the caring shepherd. Dear friends this evening, know that you have a God who cares for you.
[26:48] Indeed, verse 6, a God who has compassion on his people. And so what these people need, what we need, is a true shepherd. Not false shepherds, true shepherd. Now just look at all the shepherding language with me briefly here.

Verse 3, The Lord of hosts cares for his flock. Verse 6, he'll bring them back. Verse 8 speaks of God whistling for them.
That's kind of shepherd language. Redeeming them, bringing them back. Verse 9, Though I scattered them. Sheep scattered, aren't they? And verse 10, God says, I will bring them home. Here are words that describe, that hint at, that point to, the picture of a shepherd gathering. Verse 6, of saving his people and gathering them up.
We've enjoyed watching the sheep and the lambs all about the fields just around our house. And you see it there. The farmer arrives now on his quad bike. They probably didn't have quad bikes back then, okay.
[27:47] But on his quad bike into the field with food. And what do the sheep do? They run right towards him, gathered around him. They were scattered. But now they are there. The shepherd comes and cares for them.

But that's not the end of it. Not only that God will bring back all the remnants of his people and gather them in. He'll gather them for what? To restore them. To strengthen them. Verse 6, verse 12, we get that repeated refrain.
He's going to strengthen them, restore them, make them strong. It's the image not of a ruined church steeple, but of one where bells are ringing and the word goes out and food and wine are eaten as people gather in homes.
And how will all this happen? How will all this happen? Very briefly. Well, right at the end of chapter 10, we see here, it's going to happen. And it's hinted at a second exodus, a type of second exodus. Verse 10, I will bring them home from the land of Egypt. Verse 11, passing through the sea of trouble, strike down the sea. All the depths of the Nile dried up.

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[28:56] The pride of Assyria laid low, the scepter of Egypt dried up. Do you see that language? Sea, Nile, Egypt being brought in. You see hinted at here in chapter 10 is a shepherd.

One who brings a second exodus to redeem, to gather his people. And of course, all of this is done in the Lord Jesus. One who takes us from bondage to sin, to freedom in Christ.
The good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. And so friends, this evening, as we look at chapter 9 and we rush through here, chapter 10, what I want you to see is this.
We do not have a reluctant saviour. We do not have a reluctant saviour. No, he is, what, full of compassion, full of care, as he seeks us and gathers us and brings us together to save us.
The Lord is not a hard taskmaster making us save ourselves, which of course we never could. No, it is he who says that he will do it. Did you notice that repeated?
[30:00] Last thing and we're done. All the way through. Do you see it? Just skim your eyes down there. I will, I will, I will, I will strengthen them. I will save them. I will whistle for them. I will bring them back.

I will bring them to the land. And so, dear friends, rejoice. Rejoice and be strong in the Lord. Be encouraged in the Lord who strengthens and redeems and saves us.
He is the one to do it. He is the one who is mighty to save. And knowing all that then, friends, very briefly, verse 12, let us then be encouraged to walk in his name.
He's called us. He alone has saved us so that we might walk in his name and walk in his ways. So, dear friends, when enemies mount up, when opposition grows, when rulers turn on God and his people, when false teaching comes into the church and no longer people walk in his ways, turn to God, Lord Jesus, we thank you so much for your rule and reign in this world.
Thank you, Lord, that you are a God who came to this earth, who took on human flesh, that you might come to this earth and save us from our sin.
[31:33] Thank you that you are humble and lowly of heart, full of love and care for us. And thank you that one day you will return, gathering your people, and you will make us shine like the jewels of a crown to the very ends of the earth, and nothing will ever come against us again.

But we thank you too, Lord Jesus, that you are the great shepherd, the good shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep, who whistles, who calls out, who gathers his flock back to him.
And so we rejoice for your shepherding care of us. In all that we face, Lord, in all our trials and circumstances, whatever it is this evening we're facing in life, may we turn to you, our shepherd king, in praise and worship and glory, expectant of the day when you will return.
There will be no more ruins. There will be no more enemies, no more wolves to attack. But gloriously, we will see you face to face. And in glory and new heavens and new earth, we will worship you forever.
Speed the day, Lord Jesus, we pray. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

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