

Zechariah 9:9-16

2015 Summer Series: Zechariah

My memory is not always that great. My wife will send me to the store, I get sidetracked by something, and pretty soon I'm calling her on the phone and says: "*What was the 3rd thing you wanted to pick up?*" I remember my anniversary date. I do remember my kids' birthdays. (I do have to do the math in my head to remember how old they are.) I even know the birthdays of my two grandchildren. But you go much further out than that, I will get myself in trouble.

Then there are the really strange things that I can remember like the 3 letters airport codes such as MKE, or ORD for O'Hare, Chicago or MCI for Kansas City, or GEG for Spokane, WA. How about the airline codes such as "WN" for Southwest Airlines?

I don't think my problem is *remembering* thing more than it is a *listening* thing. Now I'm not saying that the birthdays of my other relatives aren't important. But I do like airlines, airplanes and airports. But sometimes I pay more attention to things that *interest me*.

The book of Zechariah is all about *remembering*. "*The Lord has remembered.*" That's what the name Zechariah means. "*The Lord has remembered.*" Sometimes God's people are tempted to think that God has forgotten them or that God might not keep certain promises that he once made. During Zechariah's lifetime, the nation of Israel was neither strong nor rich. Surrounding countries had bigger armies, stronger governments, and a lot more money. Israel didn't seem to have much of a future to look forward. On the other hand, God had made earlier promises that his people would enjoy great blessing and prosperity. God had assured them that at the top of the list of blessings would be the Messiah, the promised Savior of the world, who would come from them and be one of them. Now, judging from outward appearances, those promises seemed somewhat empty. The people had their doubts.

But God wanted to set the record straight, so he sent a prophet who was named, "*The Lord has remembered.*" He remembered his people and his promises. The Messiah would come to be both humbled and exalted, to suffer and to exert great power. This is what Zechariah told the people. Zechariah did all this in distinctive ways. God revealed bizarre but comforting visions to him so that he could pass this information on to God's people.

In the first six chapters of his Bible book, Zechariah tells us about a series of eight visions he saw at night. These "night visions" reminded God's people that God loved them greatly – and that he would govern the destinies of nations for their benefit. After the night visions came a series of prophetic utterances that stressed the same thing. The rule of the Lord of hosts, the God of all heavenly and earthly armies, will endure to the end and will show itself most fully in the work of the Messiah. It was a message of a glorious kingdom with a glorious king.

"The Lord has remembered." The message of Zechariah was as good as his name. God had declared that he would come and act on behalf of his people. And in chapter one the message rings out, **"I will return to Jerusalem with mercy"** (1:16). In chapter two the promise is given, **"I will be a protecting wall of fire around my people"** and **"I will live among you"** (2:5,11). Chapter three comforts with the words, **"I will bring my servant, the Branch (the Messiah)"** to be among you (3:8). And similar promises are then given throughout the book of Zechariah.

But probably the most familiar promise that Zechariah says is one that you know so well. Here is how it goes: **"Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."** This, of course, is the promise so dramatically fulfilled when Jesus the Messiah entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Some historians tell us that 2000 years ago, the Jewish leaders called the Sadducees had a tradition in which they believed the Messiah would show up four days before Passover on a given year. They kept the gates of the Temple open so that He could walk right in to his rightful place. Because of this, Jewish nationalistic fever was at its peak on this particular day. The Romans would have extra troops activated and on alert for this day. They feared the Jews would try another revolt under some religiously crazed radical as had happened in the past. Tensions were very high on that day. And that is the very day Jesus chose to enter Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9. The

welcoming crowd shouted, "**Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!**" This was a very dangerous thing to be expressing at that moment.

Now think about this: God shows some remarkable visions to one of his prophets – Zechariah 500 years before Jesus is born. He then uses a group of people who thought that they were better than anyone else, but didn't even believe in the resurrection of the dead to come up with this crazy idea that the Messiah is just going to walk into the temple to setup shop. Then it happens.

When the events unfolded, we are told "**at first the disciples did not understand all this.**" (Jn 12:16). Jesus was pretty good at orchestrating events in the world for his purposes. Zechariah wanted the people of his day that when this Messiah comes, he is going to come in the exact way he had promised.

He is going to come with a purpose. He will rescue his people. "**Then the Lord will appear over them; his arrow will flash like lightning. The Sovereign Lord will sound the trumpet; he will march in the storms of the south, and the Lord Almighty will shield them. They will destroy and overcome with sling stones. ... The Lord their God will save them on that day as the flock of his people.**"

What a message Zechariah is bringing to God's people. *You think you have this all figured out? You think you can do this all by yourself? You think you are so smart?* God says to this world: **I GOT THIS ONE! JUST WATCH AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS!**

It is getting closer to the end of the Old Testament. God will soon go silent for about 400 years. Then it will happen --- "**The Lord has remembered.**" He has remembered his promises and his people – and will never forget them. This is *the major message from the minor prophets*. It is this message of God that deserves our trust, and it gives birth to our joy. Amen.