

The Leader We Need

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[0 : 0 0] Well, elections are coming up and politicians are giving their manifestos and parties are presenting to the voters Well themselves as the only option for trying to persuade them to give them their vote And so we as voters have the choice have the Have to consider who we want to be the next leader of our country. What kind of leader do we want?

What kind of leader do we think our country needs? And to make that decision you might first look at the promises that a party makes You might look at their track record maybe of keeping those promises Quite a lot of promises have been made promises to build new homes to help people buy homes Promises about immigration to make jobs to reduce poverty green energy support the NHS and all these promises matter But you'll know as well as I do that equally important is the person behind the pledge Can we trust the person who is making these promises?

Who is the leader who is going to drive these things forward? Do they have integrity? Are we willing to back them and are we convinced that they're going to do what they promise? Well, as we move into chapters 9 to 11 in Zechariah There's lots of things that these chapters say you won't be able to cover them all But one big theme that runs through them all is this topic of leadership If you remember on our timeline if we could have our first slide and Zechariah is speaking to the remnant of Israel Over 70 years before God allowed them to be conquered by the Babylonians and in 587 BC They were exiled from the land because of their persistent rebellion against God When the Persians though became top dog There's that change of power the Persians decided to send some allow some people a trickle of The remnant of Israel to return back to the land that happened about five three eight BC anyway But the return wasn't nearly what people had expected life was hard. They were still under the rule of the Persians

They didn't have their own king Jerusalem was in ruins and people struggled to get by Remarkably though in that time the temple was still built under the encouragement and urging of prophets like Haggai and Zechariah and the priest Ezra But rebuilding the temple wasn't well that that's been the focus of chapters 1 to 8 That wasn't all that Zechariah has been saying The temple was never the end goal in and of itself if you remember What we've seen is that the temple always pointed beyond itself the restoration of the temple pointed beyond itself to the greater restoration that God was going to Bring to his people when he was going to put his king once more on the throne on the land would once more enjoy the bounty as God blessed his people But the question is who could bring this restoration who could deliver on all these promises?

What kind of leader? Could deliver on these pledges There were promises for Zechariah's generation and as we've seen there also promises for God's people even here in 2024 carl away and chapters 9 to 11 tell us a little bit about that leader and give us two main images to Understand who God's leader is they give us the image of a king and a shepherd And they tell us first that we need a king who will bring peace to the nations in chapter 9 And chapters 10 11 tell us we need a shepherd who will care for the flock We're gonna look at each of those points in turn first We need a king who will bring peace to the nations Let's first look at the king's manifesto. It's there in chapter 9 in verse 10 And you can see there says he will bring peace to the nations Now I admit I haven't read all the party manifestos I haven't searched through them, but unless I've missed it. No one so far has

[4 : 01] Given such an ambitious Promise as to promise world peace Maybe I've missed it though, but that's the manifesto here of God's king peace to all the nations But that peace plan might seem strange at first because it begins with war and conquest God's promise for peace begins with judgment in verses 1 to 6 As you can see on the map we've gone to the next slide God's judgment begins against the Phoenicians in the north and then it goes To the west to site the port cities of Sidon and Tyre and then south to the Philistine cities of Ashdod Ashkelon Gaza and Ekron Now the cities of Tyre and Sidon were wealthy trading ports and they're extremely rich versus verse 3 tells us that they Heaped up silver like dust and fine gold like the mud on the streets and Tyre was extremely well defended It were reminded in verse 3 that they had They built at themselves a rampart

It's actually more than a rampart. I was on an island. They thought them. They thought they were impregnable They were unstoppable That nothing they were invincible But in verse 4 God tells them that they're not verse 4 behold the Lord will strip her of her possessions and Strike down her power on the sea and she shall be devoured by fire Now many people think that if they have lots of money they'll be secure that if they just get a bit more in the bank If they just get that house if they just get that job if they just get that big lump of savings Then they're secure their future is sure Many countries think that they can be secure if they have enough have a big enough army to enforce peace a big enough Nuclear arsenal as a deterrent enough fancy weapons Top of the range ships and jets to do what they want But over the past 20 years we've seen that neither of those things are true People lost tens of thousands of pounds and dollars overnight in the financial crash

And as two years ago over two years ago now Putin invaded Ukraine we realized that global order can't just be Maintained by blocks of countries with fragile agreements So money and military can't be bring world peace, but is God's manifesto any better?

Well before there can be peace There must be justice That's part of the point in chapter 9 just I mean earlier in the last few days President Zelensky said they can't just be peace while Russia is still sitting on those territories They're not just going to ignore all the wrong things that have happened and God is just he won't just ignore The wrong that has happened either And so first he's going to bring justice to these nations And verse one we read that God is against the masqueras why?

Because the Lord has his eye on mankind God is the God who sees everything God isn't just concerned with the lives of Christians his people God is concerned with his whole creation. He sees everything that is done All peoples and nations and rulers are ultimately accountable to him And God will call for people to give an account and he will bring justice And that really brings us to the nub of the problem. There cannot be peace While there's all these multiple leaders vying for power multiple powers jostling and fighting for supremacy The peace in verse 10 if you look in verse 10 ultimately comes When God's rule is established you look at down at verse 10 again. He shall speak peace to the nations His rulers are ultimately accountable to him And he will be the king of the nations His rule shall be from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth World peace doesn't happen through a round table discussion in the UN as good as that is It happens through the conquest of God's king

[7 : 55] We don't have time to look in detail at verses 13 to 15 But essentially it describes God as a warrior who puts down every rebellion against him And brings all peoples and nations all kings and powers and authorities And it's only when all powers and authorities and kings and prime ministers and presidents and everyone else Has knelt at God's feet has laid their crowns before him That there can be peace Peace for humanity and ultimately peace with God That's the source of our peace has been shattered in this world because when humanity Rebelled against God and peace can only be restored When humanity wants more kneel at God's feet and that can only come as we'll see through Jesus Christ But kneeling is a good place to be because God's manifesto for peace contains not just judgment But mercy And you see it there in verse seven the Philistines speaks of the Philistines. They were the long-term enemies of Israel

But God promises to cleanse them that language of taking the blood away from their mouth the abominations from their teeth is His language of cleansing them from their idolatrous practices And he says that they will be like a clan of Judah God is going to include these people who are once rebellious who are once The enemy into his king and in his mercy when they kneel and repent before him They'll be welcomed into his kingdom and that's a promise that is not just for the philistines, but for all people from all nations When people come and kneel before God's king, he is merciful He welcomes he includes them So God's manifesto for peace will involve humbling the proud bringing justice to the mighty But also graciously gathering all who kneel And it's worth us knowing that in part that was fulfilled What we see these verses were fulfilled around two hundred years later in part in 333 bc Alexander the great decisively defeated the persian army in the battle of ices and then he then went

Um and went to Damascus and Sidon then Tyre those arrows trace his route Um as as he took over these various cities And when just as Tyre thought thought it was impregnable Um, Alexander the great after a long siege took it And he burned it to the ground Exactly as Goddent You might see God used Alexander as a as the tool of his judgment Um, he used it to humble the proud to bring them down And as surely as he did that we can be sure that God's he will send his king Um, but Alexander wasn't God's promised king Um, he may have been God's tool for judgment at that exact time But he certainly wasn't the promised king. We meet the king when we come to verse nine And we've seen the king's manifesto. Let's look at um chapter nine verse nine where we see the king's character I wonder what characteristics you would look for in a political leader? I wonder what polo that what qualities

Um, you'd put down on your CV if you were applying for a management position or what you'd look for if you were hiring What do you put I don't know decisive? Good communicator integrity honesty strong and stable Maybe that someone is passionate that they're charismatic That they're trustworthy That they're trustworthy I wonder if we would look for any of the qualities that we see In verse nine because here we meet God's king The person who will deliver this promise of peace. Let's read it again rejoice greatly. Oh daughter of zion shout aloud Oh daughter of Jerusalem Behold your king is coming to you righteous and having salvation as he humble and mounted on a donkey on a colt the fall of a donkey And zekariya highlights three things about this king's character in verse nine. First of all, this king is righteous This king is righteous if he's righteous that means he meets God's perfect standard all too often politicians can dish out the law

Can't they? But then they think they're above the law whether that's Having a party or traveling the length of a country during lockdown or many other things But not so with God's king. There's no double standard The rule the law he rules by is the law he lives by God's king because God's king is well is God God's king His his character Perfectly reflects the law that is a reflection of God's own character There's no hypocrisy this complete integrity and while we might not use the word righteous And when we think of what the idea ruler would be I think when we consider that When we consider this perfect ruler that has complete integrity I think we'd all say that's an essential quality of any leader, especially one Who's going to rule the world?

[12:57] Second God's king is described as having salvation while this could be described as Understood as bringing salvation to others. It's probably better understood as having been saved. We might think that's strange Why would God's king need to having been saved?

Well, in some ways it's talking about it's making a contrast between a king that relies on their own strength And a king that relies on God I'm looking all the way back to the reign of king David David frequently had to rely on God's strength It was God who won the battles for him. This is picturing a king who's having salvation who's resting in God He's not accumulating in stockpiling horses in chariots to back his plans Rather, he's resting in God who has saved him and who will continue to be his strength Third and maybe most importantly God's king is humble How humble? Well, he's mounted not on a warhorse or a chariot, but on a donkey and not just a donkey the cult Uh, not even a fully grown donkey And there are very few politicians. I think you could describe as humble Um, especially who are humble not just in public in front of the cameras, but their character through through inside and outside But when you see a humble leader, isn't it beautiful?

When you see someone who rules and who leads not by pushing and cajoling others to do stuff for them But who's constantly willing to give and to serve And to put themselves down in order to build up other people Who doesn't puff themselves up to be seen who isn't domineering and arrogant You follow a humble leader not because they make you you serve them not because they force you But a humble leader you you follow their lead because first of all they serve you Is that the kind of leader you would vote for? Is that the kind of leader you would welcome?

After Zechariah wrote these words empires rose and fell kings came and went and yet they were still waiting for god's king until 33 BC AD when god's king entered Jerusalem Let me read to us from John chapter 12 verse 12 The next day a large crowd that had come to the feast as the feet of feast of Passover heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him crying out hosanna Blessed is he who comes in the name of the lord even the king of Israel And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it just as it is written Fear not daughter of Zion behold your king is coming sitting on a donkey's colt His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified They remembered that these things have been written about him and have been done to him Why did ever wondered why Jesus sat on a fold of a donkey?

It's because it was written about in Isaiah. Sorry Zechariah Jesus was deliberately saying I am that king I'm the king that was promised then I'm god's king on a colt And there's no one who better embodies those characteristics in verse 9. He is righteous Through his whole life Jesus didn't put a foot wrong When he was on trial the prosecution didn't have a case just false accusations again and again pilot said To the chief priests and religious leaders This man is innocent And yet he was crucified why?

[16 : 24] Well because he's a humble king The apostle Paul tells us that he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death Even death on the cross Jesus the righteous king didn't withdraw himself from sinful people rather he came To be with tax collectors and sinners were told He came he humbled himself taking our sin To pay for our sin to have it placed on his shoulders to bear God's wrath the punishment we deserve And to die in our place So that we could have his righteousness And now having risen from the dead Jesus speaks peace to all nations. He speaks peace through his word He speaks peace through his church through the message that we bring to the world In Jesus' own words the Son of Man came not to be served But to serve and give his life as a ransom for money Well how are we to respond to that?

Well very simply we're told in verse 9 rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion Let us rejoice that Jesus is king we instinctively all want a good leader don't we we want someone to follow When you love someone with integrity Someone with no skeletons in the closet who never misspoke Who is always gentle and just Who's life matched their words who was humble Or that was Jesus That is Jesus We can rejoice because we do have a king to be proud of we have a king that we can rejoice in Who else is so mighty and yet so humble?

You could accumulate all the power that Biden, Putin and Xi Jinping have together and it wouldn't come close to Jesus. The nations are like a drop in the dropping of the earth. The nations are like a drop in the drop in the bucket compared to him and yet he exercises that power with weakness with humility. Never abuses it. It's always giving giving and giving. That's a king I could follow. That's a king I could give my life to. That's a king I could spend my life rejoicing in. What about you?

But king isn't the only image that we have. Zechariah also tells us that we don't just need a king. We need a shepherd who will care for the flock. It's worth saying that the pictures of king and shepherd they might think seem completely different to us. But in the Old Testament kings were often described as shepherds and leadership more and generally was talked about in shepherd imagery. Now I've heard that one of the greatest sources of I'm reading a quote that one of the greatest sources of human misery is poor leadership? I wonder if you think that's true. That's true on a national level. Maybe you only have to look at the totalitarian regimes in the world where people are crushed in order to prop up one person or a group of people. And maybe you've seen that's true on a small level as well. Maybe in your workplace you've seen where morale and stress and general dysfunction is caused by poor leadership. Well, the nation of Israel had a history of bad leaders.

In chapter 10 and 11 Zechariah explains just how bad leadership was in the past. And how it lay at the heart of many of the nation's problems. We see that in 10 verse 2 for the household gods are to nonsense the diviners see lies. So they it's false words that they hear and they tell false dreams. They give empty consolation therefore the people wander like sheep. They are afflicted for lack of a shepherd. And so God says my anger is hot against the shepherds and I'll punish the leaders. Bad leaders have left Israel like sheep without a shepherd and in case Zechariah's readers don't understand the point He gives Zechariah in chapter 11 a whole drama to act out just to show that ugly history. Um just will briefly go through it but verses 4 to 6 as Zechariah's script He's to become the shepherd of a flock doomed to be slaughtered and already the sinister music is playing. Why this isn't a happy ending for the sheep?

[20 : 31] And we see why because the problem is that their shepherds aren't seeking to care for the sheep. But they're there for personal gain. They're there to get rich. They're there to slaughter them and to infatten them. Not to care for them now. You might think living in Lewis. Maybe you have your own sheep and your own crops. You might think well, that's just good business sense even if you have an orphan lamb and you have to bottle feed it. Um, well at some point it's going to have to go for the chop or become chops. And you don't just keep lambs for no reason. Well these shepherds though represented gods leaders. The the sheep represented gods people and gods people were basically being carved up by their leaders. They weren't being cared for the but the the um the weak weren't being bound up and strengthened. People were just treading roughshod over all of the poor and all of those who are weak and marginalized. They had no pity. And so as the play begins Zechariah representing gods shepherding hand becomes shepherd to these people in verse seven.

And verse eight tells us that in one month he destroyed Um three shepherds remember this is a play about history. This is a post mortem of what went wrong And so here's Zechariah is reliving God's judgment against the bad kings of israel But a post mortem of israel's history shows that the problem wasn't just with bad shepherds It was also with bad sheep. They were complicit in their own leaders We think that people will be grateful for God removing the bad leaders, but we're told in verse eight But I became impatient with them and they also detested me And when it says that um God became impatient that's not saying he suddenly had outbursts of uncontrolled anger No, God is full of patience God's character is patient when God reveals himself to moses. He says he's the lord the lord compassionate and gracious Slow to anger and abounding instead fast law of love and again and again and again even though israel rebelled against God He continued to be patient with them and to forgive them and to urge them again and again to turn back to him

But they didn't And so in the end he did say enough is enough And it's worth us remembering that there is a time when God does say enough is enough Are you living in rebellion of God?

Maybe you think well, I know I need to repent I know I need to turn back to him, but not yet Not right now. I want to have fun first. I want to do this thing first. I don't I don't yet want to commit my life to Jesus I want to live my own way a little bit longer Maybe you think God is patient. It's fine and God is patient. It's true And even now we see his patience as he's calling you to repent But a time will come when God says enough is enough Don't gamble on having more time like israel did When the time came for Israel God allowed them to be defeated by the Babylonians and carried off into exile We're skimming over a bit of the play where he allows the bad leaders to also treat them terribly Verse 9 describes just how bad that that siege was as people turned on one another As they were conquered by the Babylonians But Zechariah dramatizes that their relationship with God was shattered and broken

He has two starves. He breaks them both. One of them is called union. It represents the union of all the 12 tribes of Israel That is shattered as God cast them into exile. One is called favor. That is shattered As they lose the favor of God Then Zechariah does something strange He asks the sheep traders to pay him for watching the sheep and they give him 30 pieces of silver Now Exodus 21 32 tells us that was the going rate for slaves in those days. It's not condoning slavery. It's just commenting But that's symbolic of just how little God's people have valued God as their shepherd. They cared about God as shepherd just about the same value as someone might sell a slave I wonder how much do you value God?

[24 : 47] Plenty of people think that they can buy God off. They come to church every so often. They put a bit of money in the plate 10 pounds, 20 pounds, 100 pounds, a thousand pounds Do you think that you can buy God off? Do you think that you can buy God off?

Do you think that you can earn God's approval by coming to church? Everything belongs in him to him We can't earn his favor Well, how would God have respond to the bad shepherds? How does he respond to rejection by his own flock?

Well, the second sign in chapter 11 essentially summarizes that when God's people keep rejecting him Well, then he hands them over to what they want He gives them leaders that they want if they don't want God fine He gives them over to leaders who will destroy them and devour them It's a fearful thing for God to hand us over to the sinful desires of our own hearts That's not all though Just like God's king comes in mercy. This is a shepherd God's shepherd comes in mercy in chapter 10 verse 3 And we're told and that God cares for his flock the house of Judah Even though they have strayed away 10 verse 6 God promises I'll bring them back Because I have compassion on them verse 8 I'll whistle for them and gather them in for I've redeemed them verse 10 I'll bring them home from the land of Egypt and gather them from Assyria To people who reject his rule who are devoured by bad shepherds God promises to rescue them as the good shepherd

Around 550 years later 5,000 people were gathering on the green grass of a hillside near the sea of Galilee And they needed a leader who would care for them And Mark's gospel tells us that a man called Jesus of Natharus when he saw that crowd he had Compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd And in contrast to the religious leaders of his day, he said the thief comes only to steal and destroy I have come that they have life And have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep As promised long ago in Zechariah God had come to shepherd his sheep And you would expect a shepherd would like that would be welcomed with open arms But the bad shepherds the religious leaders sought to kill him They paid one of his disciples a man called Judas 30 pieces of silver to betray him That's how much they thought Jesus was worth And the flock what about the flock?

Well, they joined in the cry to crucify him So as we draw to a close let me ask what kind of shepherd do you want? We're all sheep in need of shepherding You and I will naturally look to be led with fragile we need to protect it We need someone to lead us to care for us and politicians Might promise them they might be limited by their budget By their own weaknesses and a multitude of other factors, but they'll promise to do that There's only so much they can do And your parents your friend even your pastor with the best intentions the greatest love in the world Will do a lot for you, but They will always let you down at points There is only one shepherd who will never disappoint One who will never use you for self gain one who will always hear your cries for help who has limitless energy Who has limitless power And limitless love and care The Israelites rejected God's shepherd in care so they were given into the hands of bad shepherds don't make that mistake

[28 : 29] Jesus is the good shepherd He is the only person who sees you as your you truly are and yet isn't revolted He's full of compassion And care so much so that he's willing to lay down his life for his sheep For you If you are willing to come to him if you trust in him Chapter 10 verse 8 tells us that God will whistle and gather them in He says for I have redeemed them and they shall be as many as they were before Let me ask have you heard that whistle?

Have you heard God calling to gather his sheep in? Have you come to him because he's calling you because he cares for you as the good shepherd We need a king who will bring peace to the nations. We need a shepherd who will care for the flock That's Jesus So let's rejoice in him. Let's come to him. Oh man, let's pray