

Kids' Chronicle

Zechariah joyfully hears God's word

BY JOE SARNICOLA

When the Lord told Zechariah that he had a message for him to give to the people of Israel, Zechariah listened closely. "The word of the Lord is upon the land of Hadrach, and Damascus is its resting place. All the tribes of Israel belong to the Lord. I will encamp by my house, my Holy Land, as a guard that none may pass to and fro. No oppressor shall pass over them again."

Zechariah was excited by what the Lord was telling him. The Israelites had been living in exile, and now God was telling them he was going to protect them from any oppression.

"Rejoice heartily," the Lord continued. "Shout for joy, O Jerusalem. Your king shall come to you meek and riding on a donkey. The warrior's bow shall be banished, and he shall proclaim peace to the nations."

"Peace to the nations!" Zechariah repeated, even though no one else was with him. He was so happy, he jumped up and down. But he knew the Lord had more to tell him, so he tried to be quiet so he could hear what God was saying.

"Your king's dominion shall be from sea to sea, to the ends of the earth. I will bring forth your prisoners from the dungeon. The Lord shall appear over them and his arrow shall shoot forth as lightning. The Lord of hosts shall be a shield over them. And the Lord, their God, shall save them."

Zechariah bowed down and told the Lord how great a God he was to him and to all the people of Israel. Then he stood up and jumped around again.

After such a long time of hardship, this was such a wonderful message from God. When Zechariah had calmed down enough to listen again, the Lord spoke.



Illustration by Linda Jeanne Rivers

"My people are like a flock of sheep. They are jewels in a crown. What wealth is theirs, and what beauty! I will bring them back, because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had never cast them off, for I am the Lord, their God. I will strengthen them in the name of the Lord, and they will walk in his name."

Then there was silence, and Zechariah knew the Lord had finished his message for that moment. Zechariah bowed again and said another prayer. He was so happy and excited, he could hardly wait to tell the Israelites the good news he had just heard.

READ MORE ABOUT IT:

Zechariah 9 and 10.

Bible Accent

The book of Zechariah is a collection of prophecies that were written by him and one or two other men. They were written approximately 500 years before the birth of Jesus. After being set free following a long period of exile, the Israelites were trying to rebuild their community. One of the important tasks they set out to do was to rebuild the temple that had been destroyed. There are eight major visions recorded in this book, and one of the most important ideas was the coming of an anointed leader, a "Messiah," who would lead the Israelites. There is a reference to this Messiah riding triumphantly into Jerusalem. This prophecy came true on a day we celebrate as Palm Sunday. Jesus himself quoted from Zechariah, one example being when he said, "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be dispersed."

St. Irenaeus

St. Irenaeus was a privileged man in many ways. He was born within a century after the life of Christ. He was raised in a part of Asia Minor where Christianity was strong, and he studied under people who had known some of the Apostles or people who had themselves studied under the Apostles. Irenaeus became an expert on the Scriptures and was very familiar with Greek literature and philosophy. Merchant trading was very active between Asia Minor and Europe, and along with the trade ships travelled many missionaries. Irenaeus became a missionary and went to a church in Lyons, in Gaul (we know it as France), serving as a priest under that church's first bishop, and eventually becoming bishop himself. Although Lyons had endured religious persecution, when Irenaeus was bishop there, peace had been restored. He wrote a five-volume book which refuted some of the Gnostic sects by using the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles. We honor Irenaeus on June 28.

Q&A

1. What did God tell Zechariah the king would do?
2. Why was Zechariah so happy?

Bible Trivia

Referring to Zechariah, chapter 1, what are the names of the prophet's father and grandfather?

Send answer to: Catholic Courier Bible Trivia, PO Box 24379, Rochester, NY 14624. Please include your name, address, school and grade. All entries must be received by July 3, 2002. A winner will be selected at random from all the correct entries submitted. There were no responses to the last trivia question, "Moses obeyed God and led his people to the Promised Land. What qualities do you think a good leader should have?"

Puzzle

Which of the following people/titles would you expect to perform a role during Mass?

Answers on page 2.

- lector politician priest librarian
 deacon genealogist usher sculptor
 cantor altar server

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