

**TITLE AND NUMBER:** 140. Prisoners of hope

**REFERENCE AND KEY VERSE(S):** Zechariah 9:10b-12

He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit. Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope; even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you.

**LOOKING FURTHER:** 1 Peter 1:3-6; Matthew 26:26-29; Psalms 18:2-3; Ephesians 1:13-14



### What does this Bible passage tell us?

Zechariah was a prophet who lived around 500 years before the birth of Jesus. He brought God's Word to His people just after they had returned from exile in Babylon, and they were beginning to rebuild their nation.

Zechariah spoke words of encouragement to the people as they came out of a difficult time. His words also look forward to the coming of Christ and the blessings He would bring to all who follow Him.

In verse 12, Zechariah addresses his readers as 'prisoners of hope.' At first glance that may seem like a contradiction in terms; but prophets often spoke and wrote in pictorial language. What we can take from this is, just as people in prison cannot escape from custody, we cannot be separated from the hope that God promises us. In 1 Peter 1:3-6, we read that God 'has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish.'

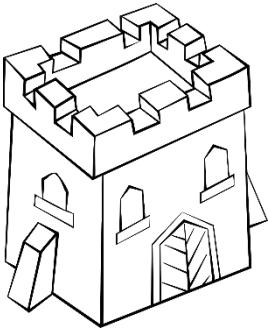
Although the people had been freed from captivity, they were probably still reeling from the way they had been treated and were living in fear of their enemies. God is reassuring them – and us – that the hope and freedom He gives cannot be taken away if we stay close to Him. So He tells us to return to our 'fortress' – not a prison but a safe place, living closely with God and knowing His constant presence and protection.

God says He will bring peace to the people 'because of the blood' of His covenant. Those words remind me of the Communion service when we remember the blood of Jesus Christ shed to save us. So often we encounter broken promises – in relationships, in advertisements, and in politics. However, the promises of God are a covenant – a binding agreement that cannot be broken.

### Reflections:

- How can we return to, or remain in, God our fortress – our safe place with God? Read Psalm 18:2-3 and thank God that He is your rock and fortress, especially in hard times.
- Read Ephesians 1:13-14. A deposit is a guaranteed commitment to complete a deal. Ask God to give you His Holy Spirit as a deposit assuring you of the peace and protection promised by Zechariah.

Write or draw something you read in this Bible Study that stood out to you.



Do you have any questions about this week's Bible Study?



How does this week's message apply to your life?



What can we learn about God from this week's passage?



What would you like to ask God this week?



Has God responded to your prayers this week in the way you had hoped for? It's okay to talk to God about this.

