

Session 12 The Forerunner Message in Zechariah 12-13

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The theme of Zechariah's final oracle (Zech. 12-14) concerns the Lord who delivers, empowers, saves, refines, and transforms Israel as He overthrows her enemies and establishes His kingdom worldwide in context of a global war (12:2-9; 14:2) and His return to earth (12:10; 14:3, 9).
- B. This is one of the most important prophetic passages in the Bible. We see the conclusion of God's end-time plan to transition the earth to the age to come. It gives us insight into what will happen politically, financially, militarily, and spiritually. This insight will help God's people to interpret and participate in those events. It is one of the most "politically incorrect" passages in the Bible.
- C. The message of Zechariah 12-14 is "politically incorrect," offending Jews, Muslims, and Christians. This message is offensive to Israel in that two-thirds of them will be killed in the process (13:8). It is offensive to Islam because all will worship the God of Israel (14:16), while it is offensive to the Church because God's plan for world dominion is Jerusalem-centric.
- D. Israel's main crisis is not with Islam or other anti-Semitic nations; rather it is with God. Her crisis is rooted in the fact that God loves Israel, and yet the majority of Israel has not loved God.
- E. The events are in chronological order in 12:1-13:6, and then aspects of these events are retold and elaborated upon for emphasis in 13:7-14:21. In Zechariah 12-14, the phrase "in that day" occurs 18 times, indicating the end of the age (12:3, 4, 6, 8 [2x], 9, 11; 13:1, 2, 4; 14:1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 20, 21).
- F. Outline of Zechariah 12-13
- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Zechariah 12 | Israel is delivered and saved |
| 12:1-3 | All the nations will gather against Israel |
| 12:4-9 | Israel's miraculous military victory |
| 12:10-14 | Israel's national salvation |
| Zechariah 13 | Israel is purified and refined |
| 13:1-6 | Israel's spiritual cleansing |
| 13:7-9 | Israel's suffering and the salvation of the remnant |
- G. Zechariah's message has several paradoxes. Israel will see both *revival* and *apostasy*. Her *best* and *worst* days are yet ahead. Her *greatest victory* and her *most intense suffering* are yet ahead. The Jewish people will be both *gathered* to the land and *driven* from it (10:6-12; 14:2).
- H. The Lord will use least severe means to reach the greatest number at the deepest level of love without violating free will. The Lord will overrule man's evil for Israel's good (Rom. 8:28), creating the context for Israel's most glorious future in relating to and ruling with Jesus forever.
- ²⁰***As for you [Joseph's brothers], you meant evil against me [Joseph] but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. (Gen. 50:20)***

II. ALL THE NATIONS WILL GATHER AGAINST ISRAEL (ZECH. 12:1-3)

- A. The Lord introduces this oracle by reminding us that He has the power to create the heavens, the earth, and all humanity (12:1). His plan, as set forth in this oracle, will require God’s creative power. No matter how impossible things appear to Israel, nothing is impossible for God. The fact that He formed the spirit of man assures Israel that He understands the human make-up and knows that His plan, as seen in this oracle, will work in leading Israel to salvation.

¹***The burden of the word of the LORD against Israel. Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him. (Zech. 12:1)***

- B. The end-time siege around Jerusalem (12:2-3): This same siege is described again (14:2).

²***“Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples [nations], when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. ³And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples [nations]; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.” (Zech. 12:2-3)***

1. The battle for Jerusalem is a spiritual, political, financial, and military battle for the control of Jerusalem. It is one of the most significant battlefronts in the Spirit today.
2. The Spirit wants the whole Church engaged in this battle with understanding, love, and faith. Zechariah 12-14 gives us significant insight into this battle—the final battle in natural history.
3. The nations will gather around Jerusalem with hostility, while the Spirit will gather the Church around Jerusalem in love and intercession, etc.
4. The impact of many social, economic, religious, and political dynamics will create a scenario where everyone will be forced to make a decision to stand for or against Jesus and Jerusalem. *There will be no neutral ground.* All will be in the “valley of decision” related to Jerusalem.

¹⁴***Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! The day of the LORD is near. (Joel 3:14)***

- C. ***They lay siege:*** He saw an international coalition of nations and their armies attacking Jerusalem. The siege begins with the nations that *surround Jerusalem* (12:2), but it escalates to *all nations* (12:3; 14:2) joining the siege to try to destroy the Jewish people and capture the city.
- D. He used two metaphors—a cup of drunkenness and a heavy stone—to warn the nations of danger (12:2-3). The Lord will make Jerusalem “a cup that sends nations reeling” like one who is drunk and “an unmovable heavy rock that lacerates” whoever tries to move it.
- E. ***Cup of drunkenness:*** The nations that resist God’s purpose for Jerusalem will become like a man who is so drunk that he staggers and falls, being in a stupor and a state of helplessness. He becomes powerless and unable to stand to defend himself, losing his ability to reason clearly. An intoxicated man often has a dangerous sense of invincibility.
- F. ***Heavy stone:*** God will make Jerusalem like a very heavy rock with sharp edges to every nation that resists His purpose for the city. The stone will be far too heavy (burdensome) to heave away (by fighting to destroy Israel) and will severely lacerate any who tries.

III. ISRAEL'S MIRACULOUS MILITARY VICTORY (ZECH. 12:4-9)

- A. Zechariah described aspects of the battle (12:4-9). The Lord will destroy the Antichrist's armies surrounding Jerusalem by releasing confusion and a spirit of insanity on his armies (12:4).

⁴In that day...I will strike every horse with confusion, and its rider with madness; I will open My eyes on the house of Judah, and will strike every horse...with blindness. (Zech. 12:4)

1. There will be horses in the battle of Jerusalem (Ezek. 38:15; 39:20; Hag. 2:22; Zech. 10:5; 12:4; 14:15; Rev. 19:18). Many in the Antichrist's armies will come riding on horses, and the birds will devour the slain army (Ezek. 39:17-20; Rev. 19:17-18).

¹⁷Then I saw an angel...saying to all the birds...“Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, ¹⁸that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them...” (Rev. 19:17-18)

¹⁷...“Speak to every sort of bird... ‘Assemble yourselves and come...to My sacrificial meal ...on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood. ¹⁸You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams...” ²⁰You shall be filled at My table with horses and riders...and with all the men of war”... (Ezek. 39:17-20)

2. Albert Einstein once said, “I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.”

- B. The Lord will supernaturally empower the small Israeli army as a weapon in His hand (12:6). This will be the greatest military reversal in history. The political leaders of Judah who live outside Jerusalem will see the events in 12:4 and will conclude that God is helping Jerusalem.

⁵“The governors of Judah shall say in their heart, ‘The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in the LORD...’ ⁶I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples...” (Zech. 12:5-6)

- C. The Lord will empower the soldiers who live in Judah first, to create unity with Jerusalem (12:7). Those in Judah will be in a more defenseless condition, as suggested by dwelling in tents outside of the well-defended capital city. This will help end the long-standing division in Israel (11:6, 14).

⁷The LORD will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall not become greater than that of Judah. (Zech. 12:7)

- D. Zechariah prophesied that God will anoint Israeli soldiers as He did David (12:8). That is, the Lord will empower Israel's army to resist the Antichrist even *before* Jesus returns (9:13; 10:3-7).

⁸The LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them...shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD... (Zech. 12:8)

- E. The Lord speaks in the first person in 12:9-10, emphasizing that He is the One destroying the nations. Several times in this oracle the Lord promised to deliver Israel (12:9; 13:9; 14:3).

⁹“...in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.” (Zech. 12:9)

IV. ISRAEL'S NATIONAL SALVATION (ZECH. 12:10-14)

- A. Zechariah describes Israel's national repentance and conversion (12:10-14). His focus changes from the physical battle around Jerusalem in 12:2-9 to Israel's spiritual deliverance in 12:10. After Jesus defeats Israel's physical enemies, He will confront their greatest enemy—their sin and unbelief.
- ¹⁰***“I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me [Jesus] whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. (Zech. 12:10)***
- B. ***I will pour the Spirit of grace:*** The Spirit of grace and supplication refers to the anointing of revelation, power, and prayer. This will result in many Jewish people coming to salvation.
- C. ***They will look on Me:*** Israel will see Jesus and grieve for Him.
1. Paul's turning to Jesus is a prophetic foreshadowing of Israel's national salvation.
⁴***He fell to the ground, and heard a voice..., “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”***
⁵***And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” The Lord said, “I am Jesus...” (Acts 9:4-5)***
 2. Jesus and John referred to this prophecy that Israel would look on Jesus (Mt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7).
⁷***He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him [Israel]. And all the tribes of the earth [Gentiles] will mourn because of Him. (Rev. 1:7)***
- D. ***Whom they pierced:*** Israel will discover that “piercing” Jesus was equivalent to rejecting God.
- E. ***They will mourn for Him:*** He described how the Jewish people will feel when they understand that Jesus is their Messiah. They will weep as if their son had been murdered. This is mourning with despair over their sin in rejecting Jesus. Mourning for an only son was proverbial for intense grief.
- F. Israel's national repentance and mourning is graphically described (12:11-14).
¹¹***“There shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. ¹²And the land shall mourn, every family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; ¹³the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of Shimei by itself, and their wives by themselves...” (Zech. 12:11-13)***
- G. ***Hadad Rimmon:*** Zechariah compared Israel's national mourning over Jesus to the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. This is where King Josiah was mortally wounded in battle nearly 100 years earlier in 609 BC (2 Kgs. 23:29-30; 2 Chr. 35:22-25).
- H. ***House of David and Nathan:*** These in the royal families represent the political arena. Nathan was a son of David (2 Sam. 5:14; Lk. 3:31). David is the most prominent in the royal family. His son Nathan was not well known—thus, from the greatest to the least of the royal family.
- I. ***House of Levi and Shimei:*** These two priestly families represent the priestly arena. Shimei was a grandson of Levi (Num. 3:18). Levi is the prominent member of the priestly family. Shimei, his grandson was not well known—thus, from the greatest to the least of the priestly family.

V. ISRAEL'S SPIRITUAL CLEANSING (ZECH. 13:1-6)

- A. Zechariah 13 continues with the theme of Israel's national salvation and spiritual cleansing.
- B. Israel's national cleansing is from sin, idols, false prophets, and an unclean spirit (13:1-6).

¹“In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. ²It shall be in that day...that I will cut off the names of the idols...I will also cause the [false] prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land.” (Zech. 13:1-2)

1. ***A fountain shall be opened:*** Jesus will open a fountain for the spiritual cleansing of Israel—for its people and land. He will cleanse Israel from all vestiges of falsehood. There will be many false prophets and idols in the end times (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 24; Rev. 9:21; 13:4-18).
 2. ***I will cut off the names of the idols:*** He will remove idolatry and the unclean spirit related to the abomination of desolation (Antichrist worship) set up in Jerusalem, including the image of the beast and the mark-of-the-beast systems operating in the land of Israel.
 3. ***I will cause the prophets to depart:*** The False Prophet will assist the Antichrist in Israel. There will be many false prophets operating under them.
 4. ***I will cause the unclean spirit to depart:*** Jesus will cleanse the land. Satan will be thrown into prison and the Antichrist and False Prophet into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:19-20:3).
- C. The cleansing of the land will result in false prophets being afraid of being discovered (13:3-6). He presented a hypothetical scenario related to a false prophet. Zeal for purity will be so great that the parents of a false prophet would put their son to death as the Law commanded (Deut. 13:6-9).

³“If anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother...will say to him, ‘You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the LORD.’ His father and mother...shall thrust him through when he prophesies...⁴Every prophet will be ashamed of his vision...they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive. ⁵He will say, ‘I am no prophet. I am a farmer, for a man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.’ ⁶One will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ He will answer, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’” (Zech. 13:3-6)

1. ***Thrust him through:*** It will be dangerous for false prophets in the Millennium when Jesus rules with a rod of iron (Rev. 12:5; 19:15; cf. Ps. 2:9; Isa. 11:4). This speaks of Jesus establishing unbreakable laws and rules in society and enforcing them directly, swiftly, and with strength.
2. ***Robe of coarse hair to deceive:*** False prophets wore rough garments like Elijah's, seen as proof of living a strict life of abstaining from worldly pleasures, to deceive.
3. ***What are these wounds?:*** Prophets cut themselves in a spiritual frenzy in seeking to receive demonically-inspired prophecies (Lev. 19:28; 21:5; 1 Kgs. 18:28; Jer. 16:6; 41:5; 48:37).
4. ***I was wounded in the house of my friends:*** The false prophet argues that he had received his wounds while visiting a friend's house, possibly from a brawl or injuries from an accident.

VI. ISRAEL'S SUFFERING AND THE SALVATION OF THE REMNANT (ZECH. 13:7-9)

- A. The remnant of Israel will be refined through the fire of the Tribulation, resulting in their salvation (13:7-9). Zechariah shifted his attention from the false prophets (13:3-6) to the true prophet Jesus (13:7). He returned to the theme of the Shepherd that the Lord sent to Israel in 11:4-14.

⁷*“Awake, **O sword**, against My Shepherd [Jesus], against the Man who is My Companion,” says the LORD... “Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered...⁸It shall come to pass in all the land...that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die...⁹I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘This is My people’; and each one will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’” (Zech. 13:7-9)*

- B. *Awake, O sword*: The sword, personified, is called to “awake” from sleep to execute God’s justice against those who killed Messiah. The Father “awakened His sword” against His Son at the cross.
- C. The killing of the Messiah was an act of men who pierced Him (12:10-14), but also an act of God who struck the Good Shepherd (Isa. 53:10; Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:32). Jesus is qualified to oversee Israel’s suffering because He is deeply acquainted with suffering—He is sympathetic (Heb. 4:15).
- ³²*He [the Father] who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all... (Rom. 8:32)*
- D. The Father called Jesus, “My Shepherd,” “the Man,” and “My Companion” (13:7). In these three descriptions we see the great mystery of the incarnation, God in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16).

⁷*“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion”... (Zech. 13:7)*

1. *My Shepherd*: Jesus is the Father’s choice to be the Messiah—the “Shepherd of Israel” and the Father’s official representative to Israel and the nations (Jn. 14:7-9).
 2. *The Man who is My Companion*: The unique relationship of Jesus to the Father is seen here. Jesus in His humanity is the One who is in close relationship and kinship to the Father, the ideal Man who shares the divine nature because He is equal to God.
- E. *Strike the Shepherd and the sheep will be scattered*: The immediate result of striking the Shepherd is that “the sheep” (13:7) of Israel were scattered as predicted earlier (11:6, 9, 10).
- F. *All the land*: The Hebrew word *ha'arets* or *eretz* can mean “the earth” or “the land.” The context determines if it is land or earth, but sometimes it is ambiguous. The phrase “*haa'arets*” (in all the land) occurs three times in Zechariah (4:10; 5:6; 13:8), translated as *earth* in 4:10 and 5:6.
- G. *One-third*: The Lord promises to bring one-third of Israel through the fire unto salvation. This will be the largest number of Jews coming to Jesus in all history, possibly surpassing six million new believers (based on the possibility of there being about 18 million Jews worldwide).
- H. *Two-thirds will die*: In the great tragedy of AD 70, when the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem, over one million Jewish people were killed. The timing of the 2/3 dying is the same as the timing as the 1/3 being saved. Around 50% of the Gentiles will die in the Tribulation (Rev. 6:8; 9:15).