

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Lesson 28, Chapters 12 and 13

We paused in Zechariah 12:10 last time. As a mini-refresher, this entire chapter is about an attack on Jerusalem by the nations. The way the Bible uses the term “the nations” always means gentile nations. And, that always means every nation on earth except for one: Israel. So, the entire world comes again Israel in this scene from Zechariah, whether in the form of providing armies, or money, or logistical support, or weapons, or just encouragement.

More often than not, Zechariah speaks of the attack as being on Jerusalem. Jerusalem is used because 1) it is Israel’s capital, and 2) because it is the historical “city where God shall place His name”. That is, just as He has set Israel apart as His people, and the geographical land area that is called Israel as His own, so Jerusalem is the center of it all and the most holy and set apart place of them all.

It might not seem so in our day because we haven’t noticed any signs in the heavens, or flaming objects suddenly hurtling from the sky upon the Islamic mosques or the Dome of the Rock shrine that dominates the Temple Mount, but Jerusalem is the wrong place for God’s foes to focus their attention. The day is coming that complete divinely-ordered decimation will fall upon those who demand Israel for their own, or parts or all of Jerusalem as theirs, and not Israel’s, capital. This chapter in Zechariah speaks of the day when this all comes to a head. The nations, no doubt in joint purpose with Islam, attack Jerusalem with the intent of taking it away from God and His people. The results are what we are reading about.

Verse 9 sums up God’s intent, and therefore what is guaranteed to happen:

CJB Zechariah 12:9 *9 "When that day comes, I will seek to destroy all nations attacking Yerushalayim;*

Pretty blunt, and most definitive. But, there’s more. What happens to Israel and Jerusalem? Let’s re-read part of Zechariah 12 to find out.

RE-READ ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 12:9 – end

I want to revisit verse 10, because it has been found most difficult to translate. Because the words about "being pierced" are taken by Christians to point to Jesus, Jewish scholars can go to great lengths to find a different way to translate it and solve some of the clear grammar and syntax problems.

Last time I said that, as one who believes in Yeshua, but am not so quick to assign Him to every mysterious mention of a person in the Old Testament that could be construed to be Him as Christianity tends to do, I think one good attempt at a proper translation into English could say something like this: "...so they will look to Me concerning the One they have pierced".

The Jewish Publication Society Bible, which is pretty scholarly and tends to be less affected by Jewish Tradition, translates it this way:

^{JPS} **Zechariah 12:10** *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look unto Me because they have thrust him through; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourned for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.*

That's right in the same realm as what I suggested. One that is kind of between a typical Christian approach and the Jewish approach is the RSV. It reads like this:

^{RSV} **Zechariah 12:10** *"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born.*

Much of the disagreement centers around a debate on syntax concerning whether one person is speaking about another person, or if only a single

person is the subject. The syntax as we have it says there must be 2 individuals. Thus, I will move on from here by saying that from my viewpoint this is about Yehoveh as the one the people of Israel will look unto because His only Son, Yeshua, has been pierced. Therefore, the people this prophecy says will mourn for the one that has been pierced is the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The House of David represents Israel's government, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem probably mean Israel in general. But the reason Jerusalem is the focus is because if this *is* speaking about Yeshua, then it is Jerusalem where due to the people's desire to see Him killed and a criminal released in His place, so it will be in Jerusalem where the great morning will take place when they realize who He really is.

In the end, what this all amounts to is that as the nations attack Jerusalem and Israel, and as Israel begins to lose badly and then God intervenes to deliver them, the Jerusalem leadership will undergo a rapid and whiplash-like change about their attitudes and beliefs. What they had been acting negatively against for century after century, they will now have a positive disposition towards. When we're told that they will have a bitterness over the firstborn (here meaning the firstborn of God), it is not a bitterness of anger against someone, but rather a personal bitterness towards themselves. They will recognize their wrongness and how they fought against Yeshua for so very long and feel extremely guilty and devastated over their rejection of Him and harm they often meant towards Messiah's Believers. I'm sure this also includes a large element of the horrible destruction that this Armageddon War has caused upon Israel and the people, but probably needn't have been if they had only obeyed God and accepted His Son. And, you know, there will be a few billion gentiles around the world that will have similar feelings when Christ returns.

And finally, they will look in bitter grief to God for His forgiveness for their 2 millennia of rebellion and self-caused miseries due to a refusal to accept God's Messiah. Ironically, it will be the very one they rejected and despised and was pierced that is the *means* to the forgiveness they seek from God. The comment the mourners being as one who weeps over a firstborn is meant to amplify the intensity of their grief and sorrow. It is hard to express in modern terms the intense importance of a firstborn son to a man in biblical times, and

therefore what his untimely death meant. It was not only an issue of who would be responsible to care for the parents in their old age, or even that the firstborn would become the next family leader and inherit the family's wealth and land, but it is especially that it was believed that the family's name and bloodline continued on through that firstborn (which had always been the reason for the Levirate marriage laws of the Torah). To have one's family name and bloodline end was as bad as it gets. It's not that far in seriousness (from the family's standpoint) from the fate of the soul that is eternally destroyed in the Lake of Fire.

One scholar called the final verses of chapter 12 "A catalogue of mourners", and that would be hard to improve upon. Clearly, Yehoveh wants to impress upon us the gravity and depth of this mourning and grief that the Israelite's are experiencing, that several verses are devoted to speaking about it from different angles and perspectives and even groups of people. And, that the political and governing class of Israel... a group usually more resistant to joining in the up and down emotions of the mass of common citizens... has had such a change of heart in a very brief period of time as to itself being a miraculous happening, when we consider that it is all happening in unison. That is, it is ALL the government... not just a sporadic few.

Verse 11 begins with, once again, the words "on that day" (Judgment Day, still the same event we've been studying for a while) and perhaps it's appropriate to remind you that all those terms that mention a day do NOT mean a single 24-hour period of time. The Hebrew *yom* (day) had a variety of uses, much the same way it still is for us in modern times. It can mean daylight hours, it can mean one 24-hour period, it can point to someone's particular generation, and it can point to the non-specific but limited timeframe of a certain event or series of closely related events. This last meaning is what "on that day" or Judgement Day means.

So, in addition to the mourning of the people in Jerusalem and probably all Israel for the sake of realizing their rejection of Messiah Yeshua, there will also be great mourning over all the Israeli lives that have been lost, and the tremendous destruction of the Holy city, and the terrible things that happened to their women during the war. The level of mourning is compared to

something awful that happened at Hadad-Rimmon. Clearly, what had happened there in times passed was notorious and unforgettable. Although it is a place name, Hadad-Rimmon is actually a dual name for the Canaanite storm god.

A collection of ancient works called the Ras Shamra texts speaks about 4 yearly festivals, one of which is called the Festival of Mourning. Very likely this partly had to do with the impending death of a god, which was seen as catastrophic to that god's worshippers, and therefore would have involved copious amounts of grieving. The Church Father Jerome says this about it:

"Hada-Rimmon is a city near Jerusalem, but is now called Maximianopolis, in the field of Maggedon, where the good king Josiah was wounded by Pharaoh Necho".

So, this is probably mostly referencing the calamity recorded in 2Chronicles that befell Israel at the death of King Josiah, who was seriously wounded in the valley of Megiddo, then subsequently died at Hadad-Rimmon. Josiah was seen by the Judeans as a righteous and upright king.

CJB **2 Chronicles 35:22-25** ***²² Nevertheless, Yoshiyahu was determined to go after him. He disguised himself in order to fight against him and wouldn't listen to what N'kho said, which was from the mouth of God. Then he went to fight in the Megiddo Valley. ²³ There archers shot King Yoshiyahu. The king said to his servants, "Take me away, because I'm badly wounded." ²⁴ So his servants took him out of the chariot, transferred him to his second chariot and brought him to Yerushalayim. But he died, and he was buried in the tombs of his ancestors. All Y'hudah and Yerushalayim mourned Yoshiyahu. ²⁵ Yirmeyahu composed a lament for Yoshiyahu; and all the men and women singers have sung of Yoshiyahu in their laments till this day. They made singing them a law in Isra'el, and they are recorded in the Laments.***

So, if I am right, the intent is to speak of how historically great the Israelites will mourn over the pierced Messiah they had rejected for so long, and is being

compared to the mourning over Josiah. Mourning rituals and traditions run deep among Jews. In fact, verse 12 says that the "land" will mourn. This is an expression meaning that mourning will not be only confined to Jerusalem but in fact will be universal throughout Israel. And, then a series of family units and individuals is spoken about, each describing how that unit or individual will behave. Each family will mourn among themselves along with mourning among the other family groups.

The word used here that is rendered family in English is *mishpahot*. I would say it coincides with what we would call a clan. That is, it's a family unit that isn't as large as a tribe, but it is bigger than a single family.

We understand who the family of the House of David is; it is the government over Israel theoretically composed of descendants of King David. That is, this is royalty. They will take part in the national mourning. It is curious how it says that the wives of the rulers will mourn by themselves... that is, individually and separately. This is not about separating males from females during the mourning rituals. Rather, in mourning the women served a particular family function. One of those functions was to be a wailer or a singer of laments at a funeral. This common ritual observance was not just Hebrew, it was done throughout the Middle East even in Egypt.

The House of Nathan is next mentioned. The most prominent Nathan we know of was King David's prophet. So, since there was no further description of who Nathan is, then we probably ought to assume it means that Nathan. However, just as the House of David doesn't necessarily mean only Davidic royalty but probably the higher functionaries of whatever government structure ruled over Israel, then I suspect that the mention of the House of Nathan was to Nathan or his descendants, but probably symbolic of Nathan's role as a Prophet. As with the government rulers, the women married to the prophets will also play their roles as wailers and singers. Thus, we have government leaders and Prophets and their families now listed as direct participants in the mourning over having never accepted Messiah Yeshua for all those centuries.

Verse 13 confirms to me that indeed these houses of certain named figures represent the involvement of certain individual parts of Israelite society.

Therefore, the House of Levi, followed by the family of Shimi (a son or clan group from the tribe of Levi), represents the priesthood of Israel. So, royalty, prophets, and priests and their wives are explained as leading the mourning. And, the final statement in verse 14 is "all the remaining families, each by itself, and the wives by themselves" completes the loop. This is speaking about the elements of families that are attached in a more subordinate way within the various leadership classes and groups. That is, this isn't only the executive leadership that will mourn so intensely and sincerely but also all the leadership structure at every level. This is showing us how thoroughly Israelite society has now completely reversed course and embraced Messiah Yeshua...top to bottom.

I think the reason that there is such extensive emphasis about these various groups of leaders is that God has, throughout Zechariah (as with most of the Prophetic books), placed the greatest blame and accountability for the people of Israel falling away from truth, embracing idolatry, and becoming generally rebellious against God... which has resulted in centuries of exile, oppression, and misery as their just punishment... is the leadership. Since this is an End Times scenario, then we of the 21st century need to embrace the truth that the Lord's firm attitude about the responsibility of leadership...especially **religious** leadership... upon the what happens to people they lead as a result of their leadership, teaching, worship practices, morality, etc., remains the same as one would expect.

So, for all who lead people; whether it be a nation, a state, a school, a congregation, an organization, a business or institution, or a family, this is speaking about you. Perhaps we all need to be more sober and take this consequential aspect of our leadership rather seriously as it has long term... even eternal... repercussions in the eyes of the Lord. Let's move on to Zechariah chapter 13.

READ ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 13 all

There are days that as much preaching as teaching is called for when commenting about the Bible and what God is telling us, and equally so explaining where we have gone wrong and what to do about it. Such things

are hard to hear, and I must admit, every bit as hard to say. God assigned to His very few appointed Biblical Prophets the duty of delivering rebuke and correction more than pats on the back to His people. Most of those Prophets were beaten up, run out of town, or killed for their efforts. I am certainly not one of those types of Prophets. But, it is clear that my duty is to tell you as much of previously written and recorded biblical truth as the Lord sees fit to show to me, so I can turn around and show it to you. Today is one of those days.

In my opinion, there should be no separation between chapters 12 and 13. Since chapters and verses were only added to the Bible around 1000 years ago, it is inherently a double-edged sword. It gives us a way to numerically index the Bible in order for us to communicate certain passages to one another in an orderly and easily discoverable way. But, it can also give us the wrong sense of when a thought pattern being expressed stops, begins, or changes. Because Western literature operates based on book chapters marking the beginning of new scenes, new information, even new subjects, it makes us think that is what is happening in the Bible. More often than not, that isn't the case.

Here in Zechariah, chapters 12 and 13 ought to be combined to follow the common and ongoing thought-pattern of what happens to Israel's attackers, and what happens to Israel's leaders and people after Jerusalem is attacked in that final battle we call Armageddon.

Charles Feinberg, in his commentary on the Book of Zechariah, states the meaning and purpose of chapter 13 (and 12 for that matter), in the following way. A way that reflects the traditional gentile Constantinian Church mindset, even though he is an advocate for Israel. He says this:

"There exists the closest possible connection between chapter 13 and the previous one. Zechariah continues the theme of Israel's conversion to the Lord."

It is because of this nearly universal Christian mindset that I need to detour for a few minutes and preach a bit about what Feinberg and Christianity mean

by "Israel's conversion to the Lord". "Conversion" is a word that rolls off the tongue in the Church. It is a Christian doctrine, however, and not a biblical goal. In reality, conversion needs to be removed from the thinking and vocabulary of Believers as we read God's Word. For Westerners, going back many centuries, conversion means to choose to become something altogether different from what you are. In the case of the Church's viewpoint, it means for Jews to give up their Jewishness and become as gentiles. More specifically, it means to follow the foundational principle of the Constantinian Church, created as a brand new, never-before-existing faith in the 4th century A.D. That principle is: Jews can have no part in it, and neither can the Church observe any biblical principle or appointed time or God-commanded practice, if the Jews did. The Church is gentile. Period.

The abysmal and hellish Inquisition by the Church began in the late 1100's and lasted for around 2 centuries. There was no actual end to it; it simply morphed into something else less dramatic and overt. The bottom line for it was a Papal order to root out heresies and heretics. That is, whatever and whoever disagreed with Church doctrines were to be discovered, tortured and killed. At the top of the list were Jews who were accused of masquerading as Christians.

For the Church, Jew and Christian were words that meant opposite things. In order for a Jew to become a Christian they necessarily had to publicly renounce their Jewish heritage and practice only Church doctrines. They had to become gentiles. Any Jew found to profess Jesus, but still practice Shabbat keeping, or speaking Hebrew, or praying in a Hebrew way, or dared to own any fragment of Holy Scripture, were burned at the stake. This may seem to be a past piece of the Church's dark history, but it is not. Certainly, that brutality has generally been subdued, but the underlying anti-Semitism remains because anti-Semitism is the bedrock principle of how gentile Christianity was created and operates to this day. This is why a Christian or a Church denomination can claim to not be anti-Semitic, but at the same time fully mean that in order for a Jew to become a Christian, they must "convert". And to convert means to give up their unique Jewishness in exchange for gentilism based NOT upon the Bible, but rather upon Constantinian Church doctrines and Creeds.

In 325 A.D. the Church was born, and immediately the Creed of Constantinople was issued at Nicaea. Not long afterward, this quite long creed was pared down to what became known as the Apostolic Creed so it could be more easily remembered and recited. One of the most universally adopted creeds of the Church, weekly communally recited by millions in the Church, is the Apostles Creed. Listen to the words of it.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic* church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Especially notice the words “the holy catholic church” and “the communion of the saints”. Even Protestant Churches recite the same words. The Church is placed alongside Christ and the Holy Spirit, as is “the communion of saints”. They are given essentially the same status. The communion of Saints refers to the canonized men who have been elevated by the Church to the holy status of Saints, and as such may be prayed to and consulted for wisdom and help, since they are now dead and in Heaven. But due to a decision of Church leadership have been endowed with a special holiness and divine nature. Not to mention this matter of Christ descending to Hell, something that the Church added to the Gospel accounts but was never there in the oldest extant originals.

Jews, since the creation of the Constantinian Church... the Church as it exists today... have not been welcomed. They are not permitted to accept their own Messiah unless they convert. And the penalty for doing that has been oppression and death or, after the Inquisition, more often it was excommunication and perhaps prison. Can we not see why Jews, today, so mightily resist being evangelized? Because, while on the surface they are told it is about accepting Jesus, behind the scenes they know it is about converting

from being Jewish to being gentile, and therefore becoming part of the gentiles-only faith called Christianity.

But, as the Lord has seen fit to do in His time, movements have arisen to try to correct these wrongs, and return to a true biblical faith... the one taught by, and demonstrated by, Yeshua. OK. Let's get back on track for Zechariah 13.

As with chapter 12, chapter 13's setting is the End Times, as signified by the ongoing use of the phrase "in that day" or "on that day" or something similar... which always refers to the End Times Day of Judgment. And, as with chapter 12, Zechariah 13 continues to weave in matters of his time as well as his past to use as illustrations to explain why what is going to happen must happen, and to some degree what the pattern of it will look like in the future. Thus, if a Believer is going to get a good, honest grasp on the End Times, one must first understand the past. But, since the modern Church discourages this, then the information we are given in the Prophets and in other parts of the **Tanakh** (the Old Testament) become covered over with manmade speculations and fantasies, which in time turn in to rigid End Times doctrines.

Verse 1 begins with "when that day comes" according to the CJB, but nearly all other versions are "on that day" or "in that day". They are all expressing the same thing: the eschatological future. I've explained the meaning of that word a sufficient number of times that it ought to be quite familiar to you, by now.

The entire chapter is about dealing with the impurities that have become the ruin of Israel, and how God is removing them to purify His people. So, God says that at a moment in the End Times, He will "open a fountain" (or a spring) of living water so that the House of David and the common people of Jerusalem can be cleansed of their sins. How did Israel arrive at this condition of God needing to do this miraculous act of grace for them? Listen this excerpt from the Prophet Jeremiah.

CJB Jeremiah 2:9-13 ***⁹ "So again I state my case against you," says Yehoveh, "and state it against your grandchildren too. ¹⁰ Cross to the coasts of the Kittim and look; send to Kedar and observe closely; see if anything like this has happened before: ¹¹ has a nation ever exchanged its gods (and theirs are not gods at all!)? Yet my people have exchanged their Glory for something without value. ¹² Be aghast***

***at this, you heavens! Shudder in absolute horror!" says Yehoveh. ¹³
"For my people have committed two evils: they have abandoned me,
the fountain of living water, and dug themselves cisterns, broken
cisterns, that can hold no water!***

There in a nutshell (as they say) is what happened to Israel. They abandoned the God that is, in exchange for the one they conjured up in their own minds. Some type of perverted hybrid of pagan gods, the God of Scriptures, along with manmade traditions and customs was the result. They had given up the true source of living water, and decided they could make for themselves their own source of water that provides life... but, those sources were always, and shall always be, as dry cisterns, says the Lord. Folks, and I'm speaking to those of you who still remain in the traditional Church, this is what any of us and all of us who resided and trusted in it have unwittingly done. We were not, and never were, wrong about the need for Yeshua and the forgiveness of sins and new life He alone brings us. But, so much else has been altered, subtracted or added-to, that the image of who He and His Father are, don't always match what they say they are. That was precisely what Israel did. They never, to their own minds, gave up faith in Yehoveh. They merely remade Him into their own mold. They reshaped His laws and commands into something that more reflected their pagan neighbors' beliefs. All the while thinking they were doing a good thing, and being shocked to find out that God was going to punish and exile them for their faithlessness and idolatry.

Please: do not make that same error. You have every means to find out the truth, and every opportunity to turn away from these false institutions and back to God and to His Word. He will welcome you back and not refuse you. He will bless you, and not punish you for finally submitting to His will. But I caution you: many of your friends and family *will* punish you and refuse you. This is closer to a promise than a warning. So much so, that I cannot tell you the hundreds...probably thousands... of stories people have told me about what it has cost them to turn to the truth. And yet, how glad they are that they did.

If we know the Bible...and not a list of bumper-sticker sayings and manmade doctrines... then it is to be fully expected. Yeshua was so very honest when He told those who claimed they wanted to follow Him:

CJB Luke 14:25-27 ²⁵ Large crowds were traveling along with Yeshua. Turning, he said to them, ²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father, his mother, his wife, his children, his brothers and his sisters, yes, and his own life besides, he cannot be my talmid. ²⁷ Whoever does not carry his own execution-stake and come after me cannot be my talmid.

Trusting Yeshua, and trusting and living out God's laws and commands, comes at a cost, which will vary greatly depending on where you live on this planet.

One final thing so that we can begin at verse 2 next week. Notice that the fountain of living water is for sins and for uncleanness. These are 2 different things. Living water does NOT provide atonement for sins; only innocent blood will do that. But, it does take living water to wash away uncleanness. When we sin, we not only owe a debt to God, we also enter into a condition of impurity. That is why after sacrificing, the Hebrews were to wash. Further, some uncleanness is not due to sin, at all. Rather it happens due to normal bodily functions, accidents, or other circumstances. Uncleanness due to those causes does not rise to sin, unless one ignores his or her uncleanness and does nothing to be cleansed from it.

The good news is that our trust in Yeshua not only supplies the blood to pay the price for our sins, but also the living water to wash away our uncleanness. That was centuries away for the people of Zechariah's era, but here the prophecy of that amazing grace is presented. We'll pause here for today, and continue next time.