

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Lesson 29, Chapter 13

Since we barely got started last time in Zechariah chapter 13, let's re-read the entire chapter. Open your Bibles to Zechariah 13.

READ ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 13 all

Zechariah has to be one of the most impactful prophecies that affects us personally and in our age, if only we'll notice it. It is the red flag going up that we either pay attention to or we don't. And our choice will have much to do with what we see play out before us in world events, and how we understand those events. And, even more, what are we to do about it. That means, we're going to need to discuss what is revealed in real world, practical terms, that aren't always the most pleasant.

I spoke last time about an important biblical principle set-down in the Torah. It is that living water is needed to cleanse a person from their ritual impurities. And, that it must be the blood of an innocent creature that is sacrificed to atone and pay for the guilty party's sins. Sins and uncleanness are related, but are two different things. Therefore, blood does NOT cleanse from impurity, and living water does NOT cleanse from sins. So, how is it that we can say that Yeshua is that fountain of living water...*mayim chaim* in Hebrew... when we are told that we are washed "white as snow" (meaning cleansed) by Christ's blood? The answer is, a song is not Scripture, and the words of that song are factually incorrect.

And, yet indeed, at Yeshua's crucifixion, a source of both atonement for sins AND cleansing from uncleanness occurred.

CJB John 19:32-35 ***³² The soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been put on a stake beside Yeshua, then the legs of the other one; ³³ but when they got to Yeshua and saw that he was already dead, they didn't break his legs. ³⁴ However, one of the soldiers stabbed his side with a spear, and at once blood and water flowed out. ³⁵ The man who saw it has testified about it, and his***

testimony is true. And he knows that he tells the truth, so you too can trust.

Now, I have heard all sorts of medical and scientific possible explanations for why water could have come out of Yeshua along with blood. But, even they don't claim that this might be typical or even frequent. People of that era regularly saw people die... death was not sanitized and mostly out of sight then as it is now. They well knew what poured out from a sword or spear wound, and it certainly wasn't water! That's why a particular witness to Yeshua's death made note of it... it was a strange sight...not at all usual.

But, when we realize the many mentions in the Bible of the Messiah being a fountain of living water, and next we learn that upon His death and having His side punctured that blood AND water flowed out, then we get the connection between the Torah commands about the efficacy of living water for cleansing impurity and the Gospel account of water pouring out from Yeshua. His death was a fulfillment and proof that He was the fulfillment of the command to wash with living water in order to be cleansed from impurities.

Let's get back to another issue within that first verse. The end of the verse says that the fountain of living water is "... to cleanse them from **sin** and impurity". There are 2 categories of sacrificing that deal with sin: the **Asham** and the **Hatta'at**. The **Asham** is to atone for the sin itself; the wrong behavior. The **Hatta'at** is to atone for the condition that sin now places a worshipper in. And thus, it also involves immersion (that is, a washing with living water). So, it is not that sin can be atoned for with water; it is that sin **causes** one to become ritually impure, and the remedy for that impure condition is immersion. Technical, yes, but something that the Jews fully understood, and so when this subject is talked about in the New Testament, the rules of it are not re-taught.... they already knew them. Gentiles, however, have no idea of it, and so take some of these New Testament statements incorrectly. Some even becoming Church doctrinal rules.

Verse 2 says:

CJB Zechariah 13:2 *"When that day comes," says YEHOVEH-Tzva'ot, "I will cut off the very names of the idols from the land, so that no one even remembers them anymore. I will also expel the [false] prophets and the spirit of uncleanness from the land;*

As with chapter 12, this second verse of chapter 13 begins with the End Times signaling protocol of "when that day comes" or "on that day". So, as part of what happens in the End Times, God will "cut off" the names of idols from the land (meaning the Holy Land... Israel). In Hebrew, cut-off is **kareth**. It is a most negative and fearful word that means to separate and sometimes includes the notion of destruction. The separation, and also the destruction, might be physical or spiritual or both. For instance, when a person contracted **Tzara'at**, that spiritually caused skin disease that is said to expose a person's inward sinful condition, they are to be cut-off from their community. This means to be separated away from the remainder of the community that is, presumably, healthy and not in a condition of sin-caused uncleanness.

One of the larger topics in Zechariah has been false prophets. These are NOT pagan prophets. They are NOT outsiders. They are Hebrews... many of which have gone to the religious seminaries of that era called Prophet Academies. These are not God-appointed prophets; they are prophets that are given academic papers and had the title of "prophet" conferred upon them at graduation by a teacher. Unlike the God-appointed Prophets such as Elijah, or Isaiah, or Zechariah, these prophets who were taught how to be prophets are better known as guild-prophets. They are prophets for hire. It is an occupation, and not a calling. These, along with others of the Jews' religious teachers are called false prophets by God.

Then, of course, the Jews still **did** believe that many other gods were alive and well, and they had no problem worshipping one of them for fertility, perhaps another for rain, but still also include worship of Yehoveh. Each of these gods and goddesses had names. But, Yehoveh says that He will get rid of these idols whose use has resulted from the teachings of false prophets, and from His people actually paying homage to pagan gods. When you add the threat of being cut-off as pertaining to idols, it means inherently to destroy. And, to speak of idols inherently includes the idea of idol-worship. The problem of idol

worship is not only that it is an offense to God, but it also pollutes the land. I'll repeat: it is meant in this verse that we closely associate the idea of false prophets, idolatry, and impurity. Thus, when God removes any of these associated items, He will eliminate all.

As for modern times, which is what the End Times is obviously speaking about, I'm unaware of the Jews as a people directly worshipping the gods of pagans. But I do know there is a tolerance among some Jewish sects for Allah, God of Islam, and even for the gods and goddesses of various other Eastern religions. Not necessarily believing in them, yet standing up for those pagan religion's rights to possess those gods within the Holy Land of Israel. That is, it's an issue of religious tolerance and equity. This is going to come to an end... all of it... at a point fairly early in the End Times.

Thus, as I mentioned a minute ago, the false prophets (these are Jewish false prophets in Zechariah's era) will be ejected from the Promised Land, and along with them will go the "spirit" of uncleanness they harbor. The "spirit" of something means the proclivity of our minds to adopt or to do something as right and proper. So, as an example, to have the spirit of the Anti-Christ, means having the mental proclivity to do what is antithetical to what Yeshua and His Father have told us. It forms the basis for how the Anti-Christ himself will think and operate.

Verse 3 is pretty startling, if not severe to the point of brutality.

CJB Zechariah 13:3 *so that if anyone continues to prophesy, his own father and mother who brought him into the world will tell him, 'You cannot continue to live, because you are speaking lies in the name of Yehoveh; then his own father and mother who brought him into the world will stab him to death.*

"If anyone continues to prophesy" means people who somehow escaped the false prophet expulsion from the land. And, equally likely, some others who decide to label themselves as prophets that step up to take their place. It is most critical for a Bible student to understand that the last God-appointed Biblical Prophet was Malachai. That is, a prophet in that Old Testament mold.

This brings certain repercussions with it. It means that the definition of what a prophet is and does changes after Malachai. When the New Testament speaks of a prophet it is not speaking of a person that speaks directly to God, or is receiving a new oracle to be pronounced. The new definition falls closer in line with what we would label as a Bible Teacher. That is, this type of person teaches what is already given and recorded. And, his or her job is NOT to add to it, or subtract from it, or to allegorize it to fit modern societal attitudes. It is to rightly teach what God intended to tell us.

Even the Apostle John who received the revelation of the Apocalypse was not in the mold of an Old Testament Prophet. God more or less gave him an ability of discernment to better understand what was hidden behind all those recorded words of Scripture. Truly, John's awesome work was progressive revelation in action. I am leery of giving what John did any kind of a title or label. He was pretty unique.

Most interestingly the responsibility for dealing with these remaining, or newly exposed, false prophets are their parents. Here's the rub: despite whatever that means about dealing with a son that is a false prophet, the more important thing to note is that false prophets will still be around. And, I think this means including throughout the Millennial Kingdom period. After all, there will be a rebellion at the end of that 1000-year reign, so someone has been spreading untruths or there would be no reason to have rebellious thoughts.

CJB Revelation 20:7-10 ⁷ When the thousand years are over, the Adversary will be set free from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for the battle. Their number is countless as the sand on the seashore; ⁹ and they came up over the breadth of the Land and surrounded the camp of God's people and the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and consumed them. ¹⁰ The Adversary who had deceived them was hurled into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

I realize that in this brief mention of the battle at the end of the 1000-year reign of Christ, nothing is said about false prophets deceiving the people. But, as we witness all throughout the Bible, everyone we read about from a negative viewpoint was not at one time wonderfully good and obedient, and then they go to bed and wake up evil and rebellious. These changes come with time...slowly, almost imperceptibly. So, the people of the Millennial Kingdom have, over time, been primed and made ready to accept the lies of the Adversary, and clearly many do. Thus, we should never get the idea of a perfect and sinless Millennial Kingdom era.

Quite literally, the parents of those newly revealed false prophets are to be executed by their parents. Why is the crime so serious that it warrants the death penalty? Because they are saying things in the name of God... claiming Godly authority... but at the same time knowing it is false. I won't pause here for long, but this is one of those moments that I spoke about to begin today's lesson. The urgency I have been feeling for the last few years to speak a bit more boldly against wrong teachings that have become virtually embedded within the Church... and which many more teachers than only myself have been sensing... compels me to risk being seen as a but a critical Church basher.

Very often I'm asked to add more application as I teach. And, yet, the truth is that actual application isn't always positive. The Old Testament Prophets were the kings of application, and very few people accepted it because it involved being willing to see their wrong and change. Over the many years that I have been teaching the Bible, I have received numerous letters and emails from denominational pastors who are deeply troubled, because they have come to see that what they are being required to teach is often not biblically true. They are taught in their seminaries, and required, to teach and advocate only their denomination's doctrinal creeds or risk losing their jobs. They have families, they've been Pastors for many years, and it's all they know. If they quit and leave, they don't know how they'll be able to support their families. And, some other reasons for their dilemma are also brought up. Yet, they also don't want to be seen before God as false prophets and face those dire... and promised... consequences. Their situation is very real and difficult, and I have only 1 response to give to them. If you know you are teaching falsehoods in the

name of God, you are putting not only yourself but your congregations in great danger. God will protect His Holy Name at all costs. Over and over in the Bible we read of examples of this, and here in Zechariah is yet another. A false prophet's parents are instructed to execute the son they love for his grave offense against God.

The Church's usual response is: well, Jesus changed all that. All those laws, and warnings, and severe consequences were done away with at the cross. That is perhaps the most dangerous false doctrine ever devised. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find such a thing. But we do find Yeshua reminding the few thousand listening to Him during His Sermon on the Mount, that whatever He tells them it should never be construed as meaning that His Father's laws and commands (the Torah) and prophetic oracles (the Prophets) have been abolished.

CJB Matthew 5:17-19 ¹⁷ ***"Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. ¹⁸ Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah- not until everything that must happen has happened. ¹⁹ So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.***

And yet, the entire Church refutes this powerful and plain statement that until the current heavens and earth are no more, the Torah and the Prophets are not only NOT abolished, not even the tiniest detail of them will change or terminate. And, it is our duty to obey it all. Not my words, they are Yeshua's.

We must not pass on this and just think of it as some bumper-sticker statement among hundreds of others. Or that perhaps we can look to Paul to override it (which he never does). How we determine whether to believe and obey, or to deny and disobey this command from Yeshua will determine our entire mindset about how to understand God's Word to us. If we go with the Church's mindset, we will misinterpret the Bible. In fact, we won't even look at

the Torah and the Prophets to see what they say. But, if we believe Yeshua and obey Him, we will understand God's Word to us as it was intended.

The false prophets of Zechariah's era, and now in this part of Zechariah 13, are indeed speaking about the End Times and the period that we, today, are either standing just in front of, or are standing upon, that threshold into the final days of the history of man as we have known it, when suddenly all of these prophecies will come to life in head spinning suddenness. If one is not prepared, there is little chance of catching up to what is happening. We have the needed tool to ferret out false prophets: it is called the Bible. All we have to do is to compare what you are being told with what God's Word actually says.

As to the matter of the biological parents of the false prophet dealing with him, the underlying issue is that false prophecy is one of the component parts of idolatry. And the Law of Moses deems that even close relatives of the idolater are to put that idolatrous family member to death.

CJB Deuteronomy 13:5-12 ***⁵ You are to follow YEHOVEH your God, fear him, obey his mitzvot, listen to what he says, serve him and cling to him; ⁶ and that prophet or dreamer is to be put to death; because he urged rebellion against YEHOVEH your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from a life of slavery; in order to seduce you away from the path YEHOVEH your God ordered you to follow. This is how you are to rid your community of this wickedness. ⁷ "If your brother the son of your mother, or your son, or your daughter, or your wife whom you love, or your friend who means as much to you as yourself, secretly tries to entice you to go and serve other gods, which you haven't known, neither you nor your ancestors- ⁸ gods of the peoples surrounding you, whether near or far away from you, anywhere in the world- ⁹ you are not to consent, and you are not to listen to him; and you must not pity him or spare him; and you may not conceal him. ¹⁰ Rather, you must kill him! Your own hand must be the first one on him in putting him to death, and afterwards the hands of all the people. ¹¹ You are to stone him to death; because he has tried to draw you away from YEHOVEH your God, who brought you out***

of the land of Egypt, out of a life of slavery. ¹² Then all Isra'el will hear about it and be afraid, so that they will stop doing such wickedness as this among themselves.

So, what are we to do as modern-day parents of an offspring who is in an official position within the Church or any Christian or Jewish organization, who we realize is teaching manmade doctrine that refutes God's Word? Clearly we're not talking about accidental mistakes or somewhat minor errors or nuances. We're talking about the obvious elephant-in-the-room, so to speak. Even if we had the strength to do what Deuteronomy and Zechariah says to do, our Western societies would never allow us to take such severe actions. Yet, we can confront them, warn them, and certainly not support them. Beyond that, it is going to be a matter of our conscience. See... I told you that wanting application isn't always the prettiest or most positive thing, especially when it comes to parents dealing with their children.

Verse 4 continues with the issue of false prophets.

CJB Zechariah 13:4 When that day comes, each one of the prophets will be shamed by his vision when he prophesies. He will stop wearing a hair cloak to deceive people;

Over and over God's oracle through His prophet emphasizes that this is an End Times prophecy with the words "when that day comes" or "on that day" or something similar are presented. So, hopefully the applications I have given to you will draw your minds to mentally picture the present and near future, and our religious organizations as they exist today, as opposed to some imaginings of ancient times. And, therefore, just who today's false religious prophets are or might be. Do not think of Wickens or Islam or other non-Judeo-Christian faiths because this is ONLY speaking about those who teach falsely in the name of Yehoveh or Yeshua. And for all practical purposes that is ONLY Judaism and Christianity. But, since Hebrew Roots/Jewish Roots might be looked at as a separate 3rd group who worships and speaks in the name of Yehoveh and Yeshua, then it is not possible for me to honestly separate us from those other 2, as well. That is, don't ever think that Messianic Judaism or Hebrew Roots teachers cannot also be seen by God as false prophets.

Therefore, we who represent ourselves as teachers of this 3rd group are equally responsible and must be held equally as accountable. We, too, must be examined against God's Word as the document of truth. And, if what we teach doesn't match the Bible, then we are teaching falsely. Again, minor errors or small nuances or gray areas are not what I'm speaking about. Mostly it is about knowing the truth but teaching a human doctrine in its place. As humans, the best of us will make mistakes, but hopefully learn from them. I am not the judge of where that line is; only God.

It is interesting that the title of prophet occurs 6 times in chapter 13, and each time God is judging against them. In an earlier chapter, I told you of the irony involved in Zechariah's words. The irony was that a true Prophet of God announced himself as such, and more, he wore a special garb that visibly identified him as a prophet. However, Zechariah's prophecy was that at one point in the future, the person who said they were a prophet and who wore the garb of a prophet was to be considered as a FALSE prophet. This is because the false prophets were able to disguise themselves by adopting a title long used to designate a Godly Prophet, and by donning a hairy (a furry) mantle (and article of clothing), it visually was part of a uniform that said they were Prophets of God. In time, false prophets figured out that by wearing the garb and announcing themselves as prophets, people would believe them and be led astray. So, how were regular folks supposed to know who was a true prophet and who was false? The answer: the TRUE prophets would no longer call themselves prophets nor would they wear a special article of clothing to identify their status. It was a complete reversal. I'm not sure what that is bringing to mind for you, but if a rather startling and unsettling mental picture of who this is talking about (and I think it is rather obvious) is not in your mind, then I don't think you've understood what we've just read. I don't feel comfortable with saying any more about that, for now.

What Zechariah said earlier about this irony is being reiterated here as something that has burst into action (still speaking about the End Times), but something else happens, too. Now the time has come that the false prophets have caught on that wearing the garb and calling themselves prophets needs to stop because people are on to their deception. So, they stop calling themselves prophets and remove the garb. They go on prophesying, but they

are far harder to catch. Again, if you are paying attention, it says that we can no longer go by whether a prophet calls himself a prophet or not, or wears the garb or not, as the one telling the truth. What are we to do if none of that helps us to determine that teacher's teachings as truth or lies? That what he says is inspired from God or inspired by some other source or motivation? It keeps coming back to the same thing: we must rely on the Word of God. Does what someone says about God and truth match what we read in the Bible? That is the validation. Not his charisma, not the size of his group of followers, not his academic credentials, not the exquisiteness or size of his offices and headquarters, and not his claims or lack of claims. This new reality requires more work on our part.

Think about this for a minute. In times BEFORE the invention of the printing press, the availability of Scripture was only in the hands of the kings, leaders of theological schools, priests, and the most wealthy. It was out of reach of any average person, so they needed some tangible way to determine if who they were listening to was telling them the truth... or not. But for the last hundred years and more, Bibles have gone from readily available to nearly free (if not entirely free), and in nearly every language on earth. For the literate, there is no excuse for not reading and studying God's Word to know if we're sitting under a true prophet or a phony. That means that the average person's level of accountability before God has only risen. Ignorance of the Bible is now one of decision and choice. And if we choose to be ignorant and not do the work of reading and studying God's Word, then it is every bit as much on us as it is on those false prophets if we believe wrongly. So, there you go: more application and it is not particularly fun, is it?

Verse 5 just continues the thought of verse 4.

CJB Zechariah 13:5 *and instead, he will say, 'I'm no prophet, I just work the soil; since my youth I've only wanted to be an ordinary man.'*

It seems like we're wandering in circles about how to identify true versus false prophets, and even more, as a teacher of God's Word, how are we to identify ourselves? What title are we to choose? But, let's not let verse 5 confuse us. What this is, is actually a paraphrase of something the Prophet Amos said

when he was responding to the priest of Bethel, Amaziah, who said he was committing treason against Jeroboam.

CJB Amos 7:14 *'Amos gave this answer to Amatzyah: "I am not trained as a prophet, and I'm not one of the guild prophets- I own sheep and grow figs.*

Essentially, Zechariah is re-establishing the pattern of the historical, traditional true prophets of God, as opposed to that of the guild prophets or the plain-old false prophets. And, the first thing we can watch for is that the prophet is not claiming his right to be Prophet of God simply because he went to a prophet academy on account of wanting to learn how to be a prophet. No true prophet has to learn to be one. It is a gift and assignment from God. No true prophet sets out to be one. Somehow, in some unfathomable way, he finds himself having been channeled by an invisible hand into the position. That is not to say... especially in a world of over 8 billion people... that this is true in every case. But, it is proverbial... it is a rule of thumb that can have its exceptions.

Amos's attitude of identifying himself as a shepherd and a farmer is another truth detector. Being a prophet was not a change in profession. It was something that God asked him to put his life on hold for awhile to do. God had a message He wanted delivered and that is all. It was not a call to a lifelong vocation. But, even if temporary, it was something that, especially in ancient times, could put his life and fortune in jeopardy. And generally speaking, it was always unpopular and most certainly never led to a better economic outcome. I cannot think of a God-ordained Prophet that was always a prophet. Nor, to move forward a few hundred years to Yeshua's era, can I think of one of the original 12 Disciples who began life with a longing to be an evangelist for the Messiah. Paul, the most famous and prolific of all New Testament writers, was an academic, but it was all about the doctrines of the Gamaliel branch of the Pharisees, and their teachings. It took a spectacular encounter with the risen Yeshua before He was diverted into being a spokesman for the Messiah. And even then, we learn that he was a tradesman and did not look to his evangelistic efforts as an occupation or source of personal income. I hope a picture is beginning to emerge of what a true prophet is, how to detect them, and then what our personal responsibility is within that process of detection.

To that end of detecting a true versus a false prophet, we read this in verse 6:

CJB Zechariah 13:6 *If someone asks him, 'Then what are these gashes between your shoulders?' he will answer, 'I got hurt at my friends' house.'*

"If someone asks" begins another perspective, or source of inquiry, about how to know if a prophet is true or false. And, it is something that if seen calls for the repudiation of the person who exhibits these behaviors. This particular detector is given in the form of a question to the strawman of a prophet "what are these gashes between your shoulders", and next the strawman's answer: "I got hurt at my friend's house".

Although we cannot point to precise evidence about it, it is known that various sects and groups of prophets (from Hebrew prophets to pagan prophets) committed all sorts of bizarre behaviors such as gashing themselves with knives, whipping themselves, doing things that intentionally caused bruising, starving themselves and more as a means of indicating an especially high piety. It was common enough, that like a Meth addict that has a mouthful of rotted teeth, no matter what other reason they may offer for why their teeth look that way, clearly it is obvious that it is their use of Meth. So, it was when a person who was obviously attempting to look especially pious displayed many of these signs of self-abuse, but they lie and answer "I got hurt at my friend's house".

There is an underlying subtlety here that we should notice. The sort of false prophets being envisioned here without doubt point to the occupational, guild-prophets. They usually remained tight with their fellow guild members for their social life. Thus, a prophet with all the earmarks that our strawman prophet displayed says he would have been a guild-prophet living in a communal situation with his colleagues. Thus, it is a further deception for him to say that he was injured in the house of his friends, rather than with his fellow guild-prophets who helped one another with these injurious behaviors to further their hope to be seen as serious prophets that their patrons would hire and believe.

At verse 7, this oracle shifts gears. It now goes on to offer more nuances to the coming judgment in which Israel will be sifted and purified. How does this happen? In a most painful way. Those who survive the attack of the gentile nations in Israel (the remnant) will be transformed into the most honestly, sincerely holy people that God had always intended Israel to be. The remainder... the pretenders, the corrupt, the liars... die in the war. Here is verse 7:

CJB Zechariah 13:7 *"Awake, sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me," says ADONAI-Tzva'ot. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the young ones.*

This and the remainder of the verses of chapter 13 have a more poetic tone and structure to them than the earlier verses. This is a rather common method of constructing prophecy used by other prophets as well. So, it means that the words are chosen more towards their emotional impact as well as for working for the rhyme and meter of Hebrew poetry. So, when this begins, "awaken O sword", it is a poetic and lofty way of having God summon the sword to go forth and injure. Therefore, it can be said that the hand that wields the sword is Yehoveh's.

Since it would be appropriate to say that this is the sword of Yehoveh, then it means that it is an instrument of God's divine judgment. Who is getting punished? The disobedient. Notice how it mentions that the sword (the judgment) is against "My" shepherd. Therefore, this concerns Hebrews and not foreigners. Since the shepherds are the standard metaphor used for leaders, and the people they lead follow "My shepherd", then the people are the Israelites. Thus, this about God's furious judgment against the religious leadership of Israel.

We'll stop here for today, and finish up chapter 13 next time.