

Zechariah 13 - The Little Apocalypse of Zechariah: The Spiritual Cleansing of the Land; The Jewish Death Toll in the Tribulation

IV. Zechariah's two burdens (Zech 9:1—14:21)

(2) The second burden concerning the Messiah's coming kingdom due to Israel's acceptance of her Messiah (12:1—14:21)

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Zechariah 13

(iii) Spiritual cleansing described (13:1-6)

(a) Fountain (13:1)

1 "On that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for defilement.

1 "In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity.

1 At that time, a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for those who live in Jerusalem so they can be cleansed from sin and ceremonial impurity."

1 In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

- "On that day" - the same day spoken of in Zech 12 (Zech 13 really is a continuation of Zech 12:10-14, with no chapter break warranted)
- It refers to the day of Israel's regeneration, the day Israel will be saved through the work of the Holy Spirit. 13:1-6 is a continuation of the Israel regeneration theme from Zech 12 (same people, same subject, same timeframe), just using different imagery.
- "...fountain" - *maqor*, spring, fountain; source of life, joy, purification. The regeneration of Israel here is likened to a fountain; removal of sin in Scripture is often portrayed by water (Cf. Ezek 36:24-28; John 3).
- On the day of Christ's crucifixion, a *potential* fountain was opened for all Israel and the entire world. Israel rejected and killed her Messiah, so their time to *experience* that fountain was postponed.
- On the last day, Israel will finally enter into Calvary's provision and the New Covenant will be inaugurated (Jer 31:31-34; Cf. Is 33:24; 59:20-21; 65:19; Ezek 36:25; 39:29; Rom 11:26-27). This fountain will not be like the laver of the tabernacle or temple that needed to be constantly refilled.
- In addition to the figurative "fountain" that will cleanse Israel's sin and defilement, many scholars also believe that the fountain will also be literal (see Ezek 47 for prophecies about the Millennial River).
- Notice that Israel is saved first, then they are regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration never precedes faith anywhere in Scripture.
- God never calls us to "clean ourselves up" before coming to Christ; that goes against the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation): first we come to Christ, then by the power of the Holy Spirit, He begins to clean us up.
- This goes against Reformed Theology, which believes that we're first must be regenerated by God, then we're converted and justified
- "...for sin and for defilement" - sometimes refers specifically to idolatry, but here it has the broader reference to the total sinful condition of the people

(b) Idolatry removed (13:2a)

(c) False prophets removed (13:2b-6)

2 "And it will come about on that day," declares the LORD of armies, "that I will **eliminate** the names of the idols **from the land**, and they will no longer be remembered; and I will also remove the **prophets** and the **unclean spirit from the land**."

2 "It will come about in that day," declares the LORD of hosts, "that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered; and I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land."

2 "At that time," declares the LORD of the Heavenly Armies, "I will eliminate the names of the idols from the land, and they will not be remembered anymore. I will also force both

prophet and demon to leave the land.

2 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.

- "...eliminate" - the authority, power, and influence of idolatry over Israel will be completely cut off. God's people will cease to acknowledge them.

- The first sin cleansed after Israel's regeneration will be idolatry (Cf. Micah 5:13-14). The LORD will remove everything that detracts from His worship and all idolatry will become extinct.

— The idolatry that will be prevalent at the time of the Second Coming will include worship of the beast (Antichrist) in the temple in Jerusalem (Cf. Dan 9:27; 11:31; Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 13:4), though other forms of idolatry will be present as well (Cf. Rev 9:20).

— The primary sin of Israel in the OT, which brought on the Babylonian Captivity, was idolatry. This is the primary sin which brought about the curses described in Deut 28:49-50.

— An idol is defined in Scripture is anything that we look to for comfort and/or security, other than God

- "...prophets" - the second thing that God will remove from Israel after their regeneration are the false prophets

- "...unclean spirit" - the demonic spirits that empower the false prophets; these are in contrast to the Spirit of grace and pleading (12:10)

- "...from the land" - while idolatry was basically wiped out of Israel after the Babylonian Captivity, the Bible tells us that there will be a revival of idolatry in Israel after the Rapture (Cf. Matt 12:43-45; Rev 13:11-18).

3 And if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who gave birth to him will say to him, 'You shall not live, because you have spoken falsely in the name of the LORD'; and his father and mother who gave birth to him shall **pierce him through** when he prophesies.

3 And if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who gave birth to him will say to him, 'You shall not live, for you have spoken falsely in the name of the LORD'; and his father and mother who gave birth to him will pierce him through when he prophesies.

3 It will also come about that if any man would dare to prophesy, then his father and his mother who bore him will respond to him, 'You will not live, because you are speaking lies in the name of the LORD.' Then his father and mother who bore him will stab him for prophesying.

3 And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the

name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.

- All idolatry sponsored by and connected to the Antichrist and False Prophet will be wiped out. This will require very severe measures.

— The measures in the Mosaic Law for rooting out idolatry and false prophecy prescribed that the nearest kin take the first steps to abolish the evil through execution. The form of death in the OT was stoning; it appears the death described here will be stabbing (Deut 13:1-5; 18:20-22).

— This makes it clear that the glory of the name of the Lord will overshadow every earthly tie and sentiment

- "...pierce him through" - Jesus was pierced while on the cross (Is 53:5; John 19:34); this passage is stating that the false prophets will be pierced just as the Messiah was pierced

— The same level of violence that the Romans exhibited toward Jesus will be the same level of violence that will be exhibited against the false prophets after Israel's regeneration

4 Also it will come about on that day that the prophets will each be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies, and they will not put on a **hairyrobe** in order to deceive;

4 Also it will come about in that day that the prophets will each be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies, and they will not put on a hairy robe in order to deceive;

4 Furthermore, it will come about at that time that every prophet will become ashamed of his vision as he prophesies. They will wear no rough garments intended to deceive others."

4 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:

- Because the prophesies of these false prophets did not come from God, but instead from their own wicked imaginations, they will be ashamed of their prophecies and the fact that they even considered themselves prophets

- "...hairy robe" - one of the distinguishing traits of a prophet was their clothes, worn to show their frugal manner of life. In order to avoid detection, these false prophets will disavow all associations with their prophetic trade and even forego the deception of wearing a prophet's clothes.

— Elijah, a legitimate prophet of God, wore a hairy robe (2 Kings 1:8). John the Baptist, the greatest prophet of the OT era (Matt 11:11), also wore a hairy robe (Matt 3:4).

5 but he will say, 'I am not a prophet; I am a cultivator of the ground, because a man sold me as a *slave* in my youth.'

5 but he will say, 'I am not a prophet; I am a tiller of the ground, for a man sold me as a slave in my youth.'

5 "He will say, 'I am no mere prophet. A servant of mankind am I, because a man dedicated to this have I been from my youth.'

5 But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.

- This dangerous situation for the false prophets will lead them to hide their identity as prophets. They will not identify themselves in traditional ways (Cf. 2 Kings 1:8). They will deny they are prophets in order to avoid punishment.

— Their deception will even go so far as to claiming to have been sold into slavery as field hands when they were only boys to convince people that they were never prophets.

6 And *someone* will say to him, 'What are these wounds between your arms?' Then he will say, '*Those with which I was wounded at the house of my friends.*'

6 And one will say to him, 'What are these wounds between your arms?' Then he will say, '*Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.*'

6 "Someone will say to him, 'What are these injuries to your hands?' "He will reply, '...what I received at my friend's house.'

6 And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

- The false prophets will even lie about the source of wounds on their bodies (chest).

These wounds likely come from self-inflicted wounds associated with idol worship.

— To answer the accusations of idol worship, the false prophets will claim they were disciplined by those who love them.

(c) Deliverance of remnant after the period of trial beginning with Israel's rejection of her Messiah (13:7-9)

Zechariah now gives us a comprehensive, top to bottom description of the deliverance of Israel. What got Israel into hot water with God is described in v7 and what will get Israel out of hot water with God is described in v8-9. By the end of the chapter, Israel will be in a restored relationship with God, but it will not be easy. God will have to go to extensive lengths to awaken His elect nation to the reality that Jesus is their long-awaited Messiah.

(i) Shepherd struck (13:7a)

(ii) Sheep scattered (13:7b)

7 "Awake, sword, against My Shepherd, And against the Man, My Associate," Declares the LORD of armies. "Strike the Shepherd and the sheep will be scattered; And I will turn My hand against the little ones.

7 "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate," Declares the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; And I will turn

My hand against the little ones.

7 "Arise, sword, against my shepherd, against the mighty one who is related to me," declares the LORD of the Heavenly Armies. "Strike the shepherd, the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn against the insignificant ones.

7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

- "Awake" - God calls His sword to "awake" against "My Shepherd...the Man, My Associate." This clearly describes God's judgment against sin, taken upon Himself by the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

— In this word combines two figures of speech: apostrophe, a direct address to an impersonal object; and personification, attributing human characteristics to something non-human.

- "...sword" - expresses the highest judicial power (Rom 13:4) and represents any means of taking life. Here the sword describes divine judgment against sin (Cf. Ex 5:21; 2 Sam 12:9; Ps 17:13).

— The basic idea is that God the Father will direct the death of His Shepherd.

- "...My Shepherd" - God the Father claims close association with the Shepherd who was struck; a clear reference to the Trinity (Cf. John 10:30)

- "...My Associate" - *'amiyth*, found only here and Lev 6:2; 18:20; 19:11,15,17; 24:19; 25:14-15,17. Refers to persons united in law, rights, and privileges; from a verb "to bind together"; the Hebrew term for "people" (those united in common origin and interest) has the same root.

— It is impossible to state in stronger terms the unimpeachable deity of the Messiah of Israel (John 10:30; 14:10-11; Phil 2:6)

- "...scattered" - *tphusena*, not third person feminine *singular* (stressing the unity of the sheep) but third feminine *plural*, emphasizing the fact that in the subsequent *diaspora*, unity will be destroyed and dispersed far and wide.

— This can't be referring to the Babylonian Captivity because Zechariah is writing this *after the 70-year captivity ended*. This reference is not just the scattering of the disciples at the arrest of Christ (Matt 26:31), but ultimately the scattering of the Jews by the Romans and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Matt 26:31: Then Jesus *said to them, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I WILL STRIKE THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK WILL BE SCATTERED.'

— Deut 4:27; 28:63-65 clearly speak of the curses that would come upon Israel for covenant disobedience, specifically referenced here as the *diaspora* that began with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

- "...I will turn My hand against the little ones" - may refer to God allowing the persecutions against Jewish Christians in the book of Acts

Israel's Judgments

- Division of the Kingdom (931 BC, 1 Kings 12)
- Assyrian judgment (722 BC, 2 Kings 17)
- Babylonian captivity (586 BC, 2 Kings 25)
- **Roman *Diaspora* (70 AD, Luke 19:41-44)**

Just as in 11:15-17 and 12:9-10, there is a large gap of time (dispensational gap) from the rejection of Christ (v7) to the Great Tribulation (v8).

(iii) Two thirds of the nation to perish (13:8a)

(iv) One third of the nation refined and rescued (13:8b-9)

8 "And it will come about in all the land," Declares the LORD, "That **two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it.**

8 "It will come about in all the land," Declares the LORD, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it.

8 It will come about in all of the land," declares the LORD, "that two thirds of the people living there will die, but a third will survive who live there.

8 And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.

- This verse is an amazing (and frightening) prophecy of what it will take for God to convert and restore Israel as a believing nation. He will literally move heaven and earth to bring Israel to saving faith.

- "...two parts in it will be cut off and perish" - the human toll to get Israel to saving faith will be steep and costly: two-thirds of the Jews alive during the Tribulation, specifically at the midpoint of the Tribulation, will be killed.

— Many other passages speak of Israel during the Tribulation (Jer 30:7; Ezek 20:37-38), but this is the only passage in Scripture that defines the human cost to arrive at Israel's salvation.

- "...the third will be left in it" - this refers to the same remnant who will ask "What are these wounds in Thine hands?" (v6). They will have come through the horrors of the Tribulation in which two-thirds of their people have perished.

— One-third of Jews alive at the midpoint of the Tribulation will recognize their Messiah, be converted and regenerated, and cry out to the Lord to be their salvation. This will be the call that brings about the Second Coming...they will nationally cite Ps 118:26 (Cf. Matt 23:39; Joel 2:28-32; Rom 10:13) to inaugurate the Second Coming.

— This will result in the conversion of the nation, the regeneration of the nation, the regathering of the nation, and the fulfillment of the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34; Rom 11:25-26)

— Only the Remnant will survive, the "escaped" of Is 4:2; 10:20; 37:31-32; Joel 2:32; Obadiah 17. The remaining one-third become believers, so at that point "all Israel" and the "remnant of Israel" will be one and the same, as Micah 2:12-13 explains.

- Paul tells us in Rom 11:26 that "all Israel" will be saved; "all Israel" does not include every living Jew from all time, nor does it include every living Jew at the midpoint of the Tribulation, because this passage tells us that two-thirds of Jews alive at that time will be killed, one-third will be "saved" (delivered).

— The NT makes clear that ethnicity does not save anyone...there is a believing remnant within Israel that God will save (Cf. Matt 3:9; Rom 2:28-29; 9:6; Gal 6:16; Rev 2:9; 3:9)

Today, Israel's slogan concerning the Holocaust is "never again." Unfortunately, Hitler killed 6M Jews, about one-third of their population. According to these verses, the Antichrist will kill two-thirds of the Jews alive at the midpoint of the Tribulation, only one-third of Jews will be saved.

9 "And I will bring the third part through the fire, 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, '**They are My people**,' And they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"

9 "And I will bring the third part through the fire, 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, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"

9 And I will bring that surviving third through, testing them as if through fire, purifying them like silver, assaying them like gold. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"

9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

- The surviving remnant (the "one-third" of v8) will have been purged and purified by the persecutions in the Tribulation, as well as by God's judgment on living Israel at the Second Coming (Cf. Ezek 20:33-38; Matt 25:1-30).

- "...They" [2x] - this now begins to speak of the conversion and regeneration of the one-third believing "remnant"

- "...call on My name" - they will call on the name of the Lord in faith (12:10—13:1) and become a restored nation (Rom 11:26-27). Their renewed covenant relationship with the Lord (Hosea 1-2; Jer 32:38-41; Ezek 37:23-28) will be reflected in God's words, "They are

My people" (Cf. 8:8), and the people's response, "The LORD is my God" (Cf. Hosea 2:21-23).

Although we're left stunned at the human destruction of the Jewish people described in this chapter, the end of the chapter ends on the highest of highs...at the end of this chapter, every Jew on planet earth will be in faith, calling on Jesus their Messiah to rescue them, which He will do at the Second Coming. These Jews will populate the kingdom in their mortal bodies, and it's through this very group that the Lord will fulfill every single promise that God has ever made to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Only a literal application of these prophecies to the restoration and conversion of the Jewish nation at the Second Advent of Christ can satisfy the scope of these prophetic disclosures. Other interpretations ignore the true scope of Zechariah's prophecies as a whole, violate the immediate context, resort to pointless mysticalizing, and end up in a morass of uncertainty and confusion. [Unger]