

In our last chapter we saw Zechariah peering into the future time when all Israel would be saved. He prophesied that they would look on God whom they pierced and mourn as those who had lost their firstborn (Zechariah 12:10ⁱ). Then a fountain of cleansing would open for them, which is the first verse in the chapter we are looking at today (13:1ⁱⁱ). Repentance means they accepted Jesus as their Messiah and Savior. Our passage today tells of the tragedy that leads up to that miraculous conversion.

In Scripture the condition of the land is always dependent on the heart of the people (2 Chronicles 7:14ⁱⁱⁱ). Since the heart of the people has been changed, the land must also be purged so that it can be blessed again. When our heart changes, we clean up our actions. Compromise with evil must end. "On that day" three things must be purged from the land, idols, false prophets, and the spirit of uncleanness (Ezekiel 20:38^{iv}). The following verses focus on removal of the false prophets. This is a drastic change. Imagine if all idols, false prophets, and the spirit of uncleanness were removed in the USA. What a difference that would make! It's true of individual lives as well.

² "And on that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more. And also I will remove from the land the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness. Zechariah 13:2 Zechariah is a prophet through whom the Lord is speaking. Previous passages in Zechariah have mentioned God's prophets (1:6^v; 7:12^{vi}). What has changed that "on that day" the prophets should not prophesy? 1 Corinthians 13:8-10^{vii} tells us of the day when true prophecy will cease. It will no longer be needed, for perfection will have come. Those who are in Christ will no longer prophesy for Jesus will be present among us. We will know even as we are fully known. Prophets in that Millennial age are false prophets. They speak with the spirit of impurity to deceive. The wounds mentioned may be self-inflicted. The prophets of Baal and priests of the Mayans cut themselves to bring on hallucinations. They believed their blood and pain would bring visions from the spirit realm. These false prophets were mentioned earlier in 10:2^{viii}. Their false visions and idolatry go together. That is why their removal is also a removing of idols and the spirit of impurity.

³ And if anyone again prophesies, his father and mother who bore him will say to him, 'You shall not live, for you speak lies in the name of the LORD.' And his father and mother who bore him shall pierce him through when he prophesies. Zechariah 13:3 This sounds so brutal and hard-hearted but remember the command in Deuteronomy 13:6-11^{ix}. By allowing false prophecy and idolatry to continue in the land of Israel, they not only endured oppression from sin and its consequences, but also went into captivity. When the truth is so plain before their eyes and yet a member of the household chooses to rebel against that truth and entertain false spirits and attempt to lead others astray, the parents must stop their son "on that day." That day has not come. In our day there is still hope the person will turn to the truth. In that day truth will literally be staring them in the face.

We know of several people in our own town who have turned from teaching deception to accepting and proclaiming the truth of Jesus. In that day it will be unmistakably clear that such prophecy is determined rebellion against God.

The command from Deuteronomy 6 to stone those false prophets was never enforced as far as we know. It was to be a deterrent and showed the seriousness of that sin and its destructive nature. It must be stopped by any means for the sake of all. While the Old Testament commanded the false prophet to be stoned, in this passage he is pierced. We saw that word in the previous chapter regarding the piercing of the Messiah. People will choose between the pierced Messiah or the pierced false prophet. One was pierced for our sins (Isaiah 53:5^x); the others will be pierced for their own.

⁴ "On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies. He will not put on a hairy cloak in order to deceive, ⁵ but he will say, 'I am no prophet, I am a worker of the soil, for a man sold me in my youth.' ⁶ And if one asks him, 'What are these wounds on your back?' he will say, 'The wounds I received in the house of my friends.'" Zechariah 13:4-6 In our time, people are proud of their psychic experiences and so called extra-terrestrial encounters. If they talk to the dead they might get a TV show. In that day they will be ashamed of such "gifts" and experiences and hide them. They will lie about any marks by which they induced such visions. All will know such things are evil. In the Millennial Age people will still have a freedom to choose evil, but it will not be publicly accepted as it increasingly is in our day. In that day there won't be shops that offer to read your palm or ply their psychic services.

⁷ "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me," declares the LORD of hosts. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones. ⁸ In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. ⁹ And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'" Zechariah 13:7-9 Who is God's shepherd, the One standing next to Him, or we could say "at His right hand"? He is the same One the people pierced in the previous chapter. John the Beloved tells us this verse came to pass in Jesus on the cross (John 19:37^{xi}). But you might ask, "Then why in this verse does God give the command to have Him struck"? It was for our sins, for God so loved the world... (John 3:16^{xii}). He took the punishment our sins deserve.

What does this have to do with the previous passage? This is how the fountain for cleansing was opened. This was what ushered in the kingdom that is now and comes in its fullness in the next chapter, a day when there will be no more idols and the deception of the false prophets will be abhorred. Isaiah prophesied that it was the Lord's will to crush the Messiah as an offering for our guilt (Isaiah 53:10^{xiii}), and yet the One who is pierced is God. We can only understand this in the light of the three in one, the Holy Trinity. Jesus and the Father are one (John 10:30^{xiv}).

If we need any more confirmation, we have it from Jesus' quoting this verse to the disciples in Mark 14:27^{xv}. He was warning the disciples that this passage was about to come to pass (Matthew 26:31^{xvi}). What followed was the crucifixion and persecution of the first centuries in which the church had an explosion in growth and in martyrdom that continues to this day.

Why do Christians suffer? Paul told us that if we suffer with Jesus we will be glorified with Him (Romans 8:17^{xvii}). Jesus endured suffering and learned obedience through it (Hebrews 5:8^{xviii}). We do as well. We are refined by it. Those who preach comfort and prosperity are preaching another gospel. We are sanctified by the blood of Jesus, but **God also uses suffering in this life to work out that refinement that He is working in us.** John the Baptist declared that Jesus would baptize with the Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11^{xix}). God is preparing us for eternity (Hebrews 12:4-11^{xx}), rescuing us from the bondage of sin, and preparing for Himself a people zealous of good works (Titus 2:14^{xxi}).

Let me suggest another possible future fulfillment of verses 8 and 9. Zechariah has been prophesying about a time when Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies. But unlike Titus' attack in A.D. 70, after which the Lord did not return, this time armies from all the nations attack Jerusalem and then Jesus will come in power and glory. The people in Jerusalem will see Jesus coming and be empowered to burst out of the siege against them and slay their enemies. Could it be that before this takes place, they suffer the loss of two-thirds of the people before the remaining third see Jesus and turn to Him?

This reminds me of Gideon having to let most of his army go so that God would get the glory for the victory (Judges 7:7^{xxii}). The remaining third that holdout against the siege are tried to the uttermost before Jesus returns and they are ready to accept Him as their Lord and Messiah as well as their commander. When they finally do, the promise in the Old Testament of God claiming them as His people and the people claiming YHWH as their God will finally reach its ultimate fulfillment (Leviticus 26:12^{xxiii}). The first announcement of this promise was based on their obedience to the Law. This time it is based on the fact that they become new creations in their Messiah.

I put forward this suggestion because it seems to flow with the following verses. The portion concerning the striking of the shepherd was fulfilled in Jesus. The refinement of the one-third may come just before the LORD's return to establish His reign on earth.

¹ Behold, a day is coming for the LORD, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. ² For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Zechariah 14:1-2 Chapters twelve through fourteen are focused on the Jews acknowledging Jesus as their Messiah and the coming kingdom. The first nine chapters were regarding the building of the temple. The two themes overlap in that the temple foreshadowed New Jerusalem, the people of God, made into a living sanctuary for the Lord (1 Corinthians

3:16^{xxiv}). In these last chapters we saw predictions of the first coming, of shepherd who would be struck, the One they would pierce, of the fountain of cleansing opened for them. The kingdom will come in the hearts of those who accept the forgiveness offered, those who were open to the spirit of supplication and grace. Though the kingdom has come it is yet to be over the whole earth. Jesus declared the kingdom of God was within the disciples (Luke 17:21^{xxv}), and yet He taught them to pray for the kingdom to come (Matthew 6:10^{xxvi}).

This chapter deals with the Second Coming, the answer to the Lord's Prayer that the saints have been praying for millennia. However, it is not predicted to be the joyful event that many anticipate (Amos 5:18^{xxvii},20^{xxviii}; Isaiah 13:6^{xxix},9^{xxx}). Jesus declared that when the world sees the sign of the Son of Man in the sky they will mourn (Matthew 24:30^{xxxi}).

"A day is coming for the LORD" is the ominous beginning of the chapter. We could say the first coming was to offer salvation to the world, but this second coming is for justice to those who refuse that salvation and to usher in the reign of God over the whole earth. **The Millennium will show mankind the difference between the reign of man that is usually corrupt and selfish and the reign of God which is righteous and just.** Then those who have survived that day can truly decide which they prefer and will have no excuses.

While the book of Revelations and some of the prophets focus on the battle in the valley of Megiddo (Revelation 16:16^{xxxii}), Zechariah alone focusses on what takes place in Jerusalem with the Jewish people. The siege is horrible with the violation of women, homes plundered, and their goods divided up in the conquered streets.

It gets worse before it gets better. The armies of the nations surround Jerusalem and take it. The description of the conquest is similar to what we have seen recently when ISIS took towns. Houses are ransacked, women are raped, people are taken as property to be slaves. If 13:8 is applied to this battle, two-thirds of those in the city will die and only one-third will survive. That one-third hold half the city. Is this something like what we have seen recently when those holding the city retreat to a certain section and prepare for street to street fighting? It certainly sounds like it to me. And considering that they will escape through the fault opened on the Mount of Olives, this one third may be holding the old city and temple mount.

When you consider that all Israelis are all prepared to serve in the military, losing two-thirds would be millions of people. Of course we don't know how many became believers and were raptured before this takes place. What a heart wrenching dark time it will be, just as a number of other prophets declared, calling this the time of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30:7^{xxxiii}).

³ Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. ⁴ On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west

by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. Zechariah 14:3-4 When the LORD enters the battle everything changes for that one-third who survived. Jesus' feet stand on the Mount of Olives. That is an interesting description. An angel told the disciples Jesus would return even as He left, and He left from Mt. Olivet from which His feet ascended (Acts 1:9-11^{xxxiv}). When His feet land the mountain will split and create a valley that runs east and west. That would run right through the temple mount on the west and across the Kidron eastward toward the road to Jericho all the way to the Dead Sea. This is where Ezekiel predicted the river that comes from under the throne of God would flow, causing the Dead Sea to come to life (Ezekiel 47:1-2^{xxxv}; 8^{xxxvi}).

⁵ And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

Zechariah 14:5 That remnant in Jerusalem that has survived flees from the beginning of the valley where the Kidron and Hinnom valleys meet, here called Azal, on down the valley that the LORD created by the earthquake (Isaiah 2:19^{xxxvii}; Haggai 2:6^{xxxviii}). This is the Second Coming, the Day of the LORD, and all the holy ones are with Him (Jude 1:14^{xxxix}; Revelation 19:14^{xl}). Some believe the holy ones are angels, the hosts of heaven (Deuteronomy 33:2-3^{xli}; Isaiah 13:3^{xlii}). Others see this as the survivors who fled turning to follow Jesus back into the city in victory. That would fit with the previous chapter when the feeblest become as David (12:8^{xliii}). Perhaps the holy ones are *all* the redeemed in Christ along with the warriors who survived in the city. The description of the rapture says we will forever be with the LORD (1 Thessalonians 4:17^{xliv}). If He comes then I believe we will be coming with Him as a part of the army of heaven.

Seeing all these things will come to pass, what kind of lives should we live today? The Shepherd was struck not only for the sins of Israel, but for the sins of all mankind. History has a direction. We are learning that every government of man will fail and how desperately we need God to reign in our own lives and in the world. God is letting us do our best to rule the nations and our own lives in order that we might learn of our great need for Him. "On that day" the whole world will get the message. Are you getting that message regarding your own life? - Next week we'll conclude Zechariah with descriptions of the Millennial kingdom.

Questions

- 1 What is described immediately before our passage for today?
- 2 Why does prophecy cease?
- 3 What does verse 7 describe?
- 4 Why did God call for the sword against the one at His right hand?
- 5 Who are the 2/3rds and 1/3rd in the land?
- 6 What is significant about the end of verse 9?
- 7 How can God order Himself to be crushed?
- 8 What will the millennium teach mankind?
- 9 What happens when Jesus touches down?
- 10 Who do you think is with Him?

ⁱ **Zechariah 12:10 (ESV)** ¹⁰ "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, 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 firstborn.

ⁱⁱ **Zechariah 13:1 (ESV)** ¹ "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.

ⁱⁱⁱ **2 Chronicles 7:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴ if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

^{iv} **Ezekiel 20:38 (NIV)** ³⁸ I will purge you of those who revolt and rebel against me. Although I will bring them out of the land where they are living, yet they will not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

^v **Zechariah 1:6 (ESV)** ⁶ But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they repented and said, 'As the LORD of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us.'"

^{vi} **Zechariah 7:12 (ESV)** ¹² They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts.

^{vii} **1 Corinthians 13:8-10 (ESV)** ⁸ Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part,

¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

^{viii} **Zechariah 10:2 (ESV)** ² For the household gods utter nonsense, and the diviners see lies; they tell false dreams and give empty consolation. Therefore the people wander like sheep; they are afflicted for lack of a shepherd.

^{ix} **Deuteronomy 13:6-11 (ESV)** ⁶ "If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter or the wife you embrace or your friend who is as your own soul entices you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which neither you nor your fathers have known, ⁷ some of the gods of the peoples who are around you, whether near you or far off from you, from the one end of the earth to the other, ⁸ you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him. ⁹ But you shall kill him. Your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. ¹⁰ You shall stone him to death with stones, because he sought to draw you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹¹ And all Israel shall hear and fear and never again do any such wickedness as this among you.

^x **Isaiah 53:5 (ESV)**

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

^{xi} **John 19:37 (ESV)** ³⁷ And again another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."

^{xii} **John 3:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

^{xiii} **Isaiah 53:10 (ESV)** ¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

^{xiv} **John 10:30 (ESV)** ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

^{xv} **Mark 14:27 (ESV)** ²⁷ And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'

^{xvi} **Matthew 26:31 (ESV)** 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.'

^{xvii} **Romans 8:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

^{xviii} **Hebrews 5:8 (ESV)** ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

^{xix} **Matthew 3:11 (ESV)** ¹¹ "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

^{xx} **Hebrews 12:4-11 (ESV)** ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. ⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." ⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

^{xxi} **Titus 2:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

^{xxii} **Judges 7:7 (ESV)** ⁷ And the LORD said to Gideon, "With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home."

^{xxiii} **Leviticus 26:12 (ESV)** ¹² And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.

^{xxiv} **1 Corinthians 3:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

^{xxv} **Luke 17:21 (ESV)** ²¹ nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

^{xxvi} **Matthew 6:10 (ESV)** ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

^{xxvii} **Amos 5:18 (ESV)** ¹⁸ Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light,

^{xxviii} **Amos 5:20 (ESV)** ²⁰ Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?

^{xxix} **Isaiah 13:6 (ESV)** ⁶ Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come!

^{xxx} **Isaiah 13:9 (ESV)** ⁹ Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it.

^{xxxi} **Matthew 24:30 (ESV)** ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

^{xxxii} **Revelation 16:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

^{xxxiii} **Jeremiah 30:7 (KJV)** ⁷ Alas! for that day *is* great, so that none *is* like it: it *is* even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

^{xxxiv} **Acts 1:9-11 (ESV)** ⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

^{xxxv} **Ezekiel 47:1-2 (ESV)** ¹ Then he brought me back to the door of the temple, and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar.

² Then he brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east; and behold, the water was trickling out on the south side.

^{xxxvi} **Ezekiel 47:8 (ESV)** ⁸ And he said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and enters the sea; when the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh.

^{xxxvii} **Isaiah 2:19 (ESV)** ¹⁹ And people shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground, from before the terror of the LORD, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth.

^{xxxviii} **Haggai 2:6 (ESV)** ⁶ For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land.

^{xxxix} **Jude 1:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴ It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones,

^{xl} **Revelation 19:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.

^{xli} **Deuteronomy 33:2 (ESV)** ² He said, "The LORD came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran; he came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at his right hand.

^{xlii} **Isaiah 13:3 (ESV)** ³ I myself have commanded my consecrated ones, and have summoned my mighty men to execute my anger, my proudly exulting ones.

^{xliii} **Zechariah 12:8 (ESV)** ⁸ On that day the LORD will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, going before them.

^{xliv} **1 Thessalonians 4:17 (ESV)** ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.