

Zechariah Chapter Twelve

Zechariah 9-14 contains *two* oracles beginning: 'the burden of the word of the Lord' (9.1; 12.1). The *first* oracle emphasises the punishment of the Gentile nations (and blessing of Israel) whereas the *second* oracle concerns the purifying of Israel (and blessing of the Gentile nations). Again, the first oracle focusses on the *first* advent of Christ and *rejection* of the King. The second oracle speaks of the *second* advent of Christ and *return* and *reign* of the King. Truly, God is re-establishing His government in the earth. The second



oracle divides into two parts: the deliverance and national conversion of Israel (12.1-13.9) followed by the second advent of Messiah in glory (14.1-21). Chapter 11 closed with a solemn reference to the rejection of the *worthy* shepherd and acceptance of the *worthless* shepherd. Such a choice causes the onset of the tribulation, the culmination of which is described in this chapter. Ultimately, Israel will cry unto the very Shepherd they rejected, even pierced (v.10).

The Siege of Jerusalem [12.1-3]

v.1: The word 'burden' signifies a 'heavy weight'. Being the word of Jehovah, divine revelation (often comprising a message of judgment) weighed upon the prophet's soul. This burden concerns 'Israel', i.e. the whole nation (cf. 8.13); a remarkable statement given the exile of the northern tribes two centuries before Zechariah's time. The whole nation of Israel will be re-gathered. The God who speaks these words is no less than the one who 'stretcheth forth the heavens' (like erecting a tent), 'layeth the foundation of the earth' and 'formeth (to fashion or make) the spirit (breath) of man' within him (Genesis 2.7; 6.17). Note the *present* tenses – this is not Genesis 1 but the continuous upholding of creation by His word (Hebrews 1.3). Thus, God has absolute power and authority in the *celestial* (above), *terrestrial* (beneath) and *spiritual* (within) spheres. Why speak of God in such terms here? It is an assurance that the prophecies of this burden will be accomplished. After all, the millennial reign of Christ will see the restoration of planet earth in a renewed and universal kingdom – Peter calls it the 'restitution of all things' (Acts 3.21).

v.2: End-time events will focus on the land of Israel and city of Jerusalem. Various prophetic scriptures speak of rulers and armies converging on Jerusalem from every corner of the globe. There will be the armies of the Beast from the *west* (Daniel 2, 7; Revelation 17.12-14); armies from the *north* and *south* (Daniel 11.40-41) and a 200 million strong army from the *east* (Revelation 16.12). Unclean spirits from the mouths of the Satanic trinity 'go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle (campaign) of that great day of God Almighty' (Revelation 16.14, cf. Zechariah 14.2; Joel 3.2-16). It is possible that 12.1-9 is not describing a particular siege but giving a general description of the Lord's defence of Judah and Jerusalem during various attacks in the great tribulation (note the seven 'I will' statements of vv.1-9). Any that seek to come against Jerusalem will be 'destroyed' (v.9). The final siege culminating in the return of Christ is described in 14.2-3.

Jehovah will make Jerusalem a 'cup of trembling' to all the surrounding *peoples* (cf. 10.9). Jerusalem is pictured as a vast bowl (basin) around which the nations will gather to drink. Far from deriving pleasure, the strong wine of Jehovah's wrath will cause them to 'stagger' like an intoxicated man unable to stand or walk (Isaiah 51.17, 22; Jeremiah 25.15-16). So, likewise will be the fate of those who overrun the land and inhabitants of Judah in the siege against Jerusalem (most of whom will be gathered in Bozrah, Micah 2.12). **v.3:** In a change of figure, Jerusalem is pictured as a heavy and jagged stone for all the nations of the earth. Those who seek to lift her from the face of the earth shall be 'cut (torn) in pieces', grievously injured and severely lacerated. All will take place 'in that day', a phrase repeated *seven* times in this chapter alone and referring to the prophetic 'day of the Lord', specifically the events surrounding the manifestation of Christ, the deliverance of His people and establishment of the millennial reign.

The Smiting of the Enemy and Strengthening of Israel [12.4-6]

v.4: Horses represent military strength and warfare. The horses of those gathered in hostility against Judah will be smitten with 'astonishment' (bewilderment) and 'blindness' and each rider with 'madness' (wild and helpless panic). These were the same judgments God promised for His own people when disobeying the law (Deuteronomy 28.28) – God has no double-standards. Whilst enemy horses are blinded, God in grace opens *His* watchful, tender eyes upon the house of Judah for help and deliverance. **v.5:** The 'governors' (chieftains) of Judah will be inspired as they see Jerusalem standing against the enemy in the strength of the Lord of Hosts. *Ephesians 6.10: Finally, my brethren, be strong in the*

Lord, and in the power of his might. v.6: The Lord will energise the people of Judah in response to their faith. They will be like a 'fire pot' carrying hot coals upon which the kindling of Gentile armies will be burned and a 'flaming torch' in a dry sheaf of grain. As the worthless shepherd devoured them (cf. 11.16), so they would devour their enemies as a ravenous animal its prey. The ultimate future of Jerusalem is thus assured (cp. 2.4, 12; 8.3-4). *Merrill: Because the inhabitants of Palestine oriented themselves to the east, the left side would be the north and the right side the south.*

The Salvation of the Lord [12.7-9]

v.7: Judah is dwelling in tents suggesting temporary abodes rather than permanent dwellings. Jehovah will first grant deliverance to the defenceless (weakest) dwelling in the land. This will ensure that the *eminence* of the house of David (as the God-appointed royal line) and *privileged* inhabitants of Jerusalem will boast and glory in the Lord, rather than themselves (1 Corinthians 1.27). **v.8:** In that day, the Lord will defend (give protection) 'about' the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Even the 'feeblest' (one who stumbles) of the people will fight like David, Israel's greatest warrior (1 Samuel 18.7). Those who are like David, i.e. belonging to the royal house, will fight as God, even the Angel of the Lord – the defender and protector of Israel (Genesis 16.13; Exodus 3.2; 2 Kings 19.35; Psalm 34.7; Isaiah 63.9). **v.9:** In summary, all the nations that come (or 'are coming') against Jerusalem will be divinely destroyed. To 'seek' to destroy does not imply possible failure but is a term that describes a marksman bending his bow with his eye firmly fixed on the target. Nothing will distract Him – God will accomplish His purposes.

The Spirit of Grace and Sorrow of Repentance [12.10-14]

v.10: The terrible judgments of the preceding chapter were due to the rejection of the Good Shepherd. The awful suffering of the tribulation is consequent upon the acceptance of the godless shepherd (11.16-17). Now, at last, the nation is brought to recognise their great sin, and look for deliverance to the One whom they pierced. The nation will therefore experience not only *physical* deliverance (vv.1-9) but *spiritual* salvation (vv.10-14). *Fruchtenbaum: The Messiah was rejected by the Jewish leadership at His First Coming and it is an absolute prerequisite of His Second Coming that Jewish leaders should repent of their original rejection and ask God for His return.* Read Acts 3.19-21.

Salvation is a work of God. Jehovah will 'pour' (a word expressing abundance of refreshment, like water poured on dry and thirsty ground, Isaiah 44.3) His Spirit upon the 'house of David and Jerusalem' speaking representatively of the highest and lowest members of the whole nation. This appears to be the gracious working of the Spirit of God (cf. Hebrews 10.29) to convict the nation of their sin in rejecting Christ and open their eyes to recognise Jesus of Nazareth as the true Messiah. This produces true repentance and a spirit of supplication as the nation pleads for the Messiah's return – grace is the *cause*, supplication is the *effect*. This is likely the same event as that recorded by Joel 2.28-32. Just as 'whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered' (Joel 2.32), the nation will 'look upon' or 'unto' the One they have pierced (cp. Numbers 21.9). They look, in faith, with earnest contemplation to Him for salvation. Remarkably, the **LORD** speaks of '**me** whom they pierced' – thus **Jehovah** was pierced – a clear reference to the deity of Christ. The word for 'pierced' is used in 13.3 and speaks of a death blow (to 'thrust through with a spear') and was referenced by John in relation to Calvary (John 19.34, 37). John does not say the scripture was *fulfilled* at the cross for its ultimate fulfilment awaits this future day. In brokenness and repentance, the nation shall 'mourn' (strike the breast in sorrow) for Him. *Baron: Just as the words, 'they shall look unto Me,' set forth the essential oneness of the pierced One with Jehovah, so does the sudden transition in the same verse from the first person to the third, and the words, 'they shall mourn for Him,' teach us that, as to His person, He is yet distinct from God.* This deep, intense and bitter sorrow is as for an 'only son' (John 1.18) or 'firstborn' (Colossians 1.15). **v.11:** As well as sonship and heirship, the kingship of Christ is also recognised as the mourning is further compared to the national sorrow of Israel over the slaying of Josiah (who incidentally was pierced by an arrow). He was killed in a place called 'Hadadrimmon' in the Valley of Jezreel (or 'Megiddo'), 2 Chronicles 35.20-25.

v.12: The closing verses of the chapter show the extent and genuine character of the nation's repentance. The word 'apart' is used *eleven* times in *three* verses. True repentance is the distinct, focussed act of each individual. *Kelly: The closest relationship is as nothing in the presence of sin and God as its judge. Each must be alone.* The mourning begins with the royal and priestly houses – possibly because they were chiefly responsible for Messiah's death – and extends to every clan and individual (**v.14**). The *royal* house is represented by David and his son Nathan (2 Samuel 5.14; 1 Chronicles 3.5) and the *priestly* house by Levi and his grandson Shimei (Exodus 6.17; Numbers 3.18; 1 Chronicles 6.17), **v.13**. Note. Joseph, the legal father of the Lord Jesus, descended through the line of David and Solomon. Zerubbabel and Mary descended through the line of David and Nathan (Luke 3.23-31). The royal house is the first to mourn – it was in their line Messiah came and was rejected. David stands for the *chief* and Nathan for the *subordinate* families of their lines – as including and representing the whole.