

Zechariah Chapter 12

From Zechariah 12:1 – 14:21, the second and final burden of Zechariah presents the familiar theme of Israel's ultimate deliverance and salvation. In contrast to initial judgment, he now encourages God's covenant people with a description of their restoration and blessing in the millennial kingdom, as true to His character and Zechariah's name, "the Lord remembers".

Zechariah 12:1 "The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him."

Burden" ... for Israel (see note on 9:1). The prophecy described a future siege against the nation, indicating that there would be significant devastation before there was repentance and conversion in Israel (14:1-2).

Stretcheth ... layeth ... formeth": The God who performed the work of creation will ultimately do the work of consummation.

But though it will be a time of unspeakable anguish for Israel, the climax of all their sufferings and tribulations through all the centuries since the commencement of the times of the Gentiles, they shall be saved out of it.

Verses 2-9: "A cup" was a symbol of the wrath of God (Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 13:13; 25:15-17, 27-28; 51:7). The expression "in that day" occurs 16 times in the remainder of this prophecy. The phrase is often employed by the prophets to refer to the eschatological era (14:2, 6, 8-9, 13, 20-21 with Joel 3:1).

The events prophesied in this section deal largely with the ultimate consummation of Israel's history and are, therefore, most important.

Zechariah 12:2 "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah [and] against Jerusalem."

"Cup of trembling": Jerusalem is pictured as a large basin from which the nations will figuratively drink with eagerness only to find themselves becoming intoxicated, disoriented, and thus easy prey for divine judgment at the end of Daniel's 70th week in the battle of Armageddon when nations gather to attack Jerusalem (Ezek. 38:1-6, 14-16; Dan. 11:40-44; Rev. 9:13-16; 14:20; 16:12-16).

Jerusalem will be protected of Almighty God. The heathen nations that come against Jerusalem are fighting against God. The heathen nations will fear Jerusalem, because they actually fear Jerusalem's God.

Zechariah 12:3 "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it."

“Shall be cut in pieces”: Like lifting a heavy weight, Jerusalem will “seriously injure” (literally), any people that try to gain victory over it. This is due to divine intervention (verses 4-5).

This is speaking of the great armies of the heathen who come against God's people and Jerusalem in particular. They will gather around to destroy, and will be destroyed themselves by God. It will appear the whole world is against them, but God's people will win the victory. Their battle is fought by God against those who oppose His people.

Zechariah 12:4 "In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness."

Horses, ancient symbols of strength, emphasize God’s superior power over Israel’s enemies. Confusion, madness, and blindness are noted as curses on Israel (in Deut. 28:28); here they are promised to Israel’s enemies.

This supernatural act against the forces of evil will be maddening. They will not know where to run, or who to fight. They will in fact, begin fighting each other.

“I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah” will be a look of love and pity, not unmixed with tender reproach. This will have somewhat the same effect on stubborn Israel as the look that was given to Peter by Jesus in the hall of Caiaphas the High Priest after Peter had denied Him three times. It will at last soften and melt their hard hearts to true repentance, and cause them to weep bitterly.

Zechariah 12:5 "And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem [shall be] my strength in the LORD of hosts their God."

Knowing that God had chosen Jerusalem as the city of His special affection will give confidence to the “clan” (leaders), all over the land (Psalm 46:5). This verse has overtones indicating the saving faith of the Jews in that day, since they are claiming to have trust in God.

Suddenly, the governors of Judah realize that God is fighting for them. This is supernatural protection from God on His people. When they see these enemies being confused and killing each other, they will know that the God of Jerusalem is their very present help.

The governors or princes of Judah realize that the inhabitants of Jerusalem are strong through Jehovah their God, through the fact that Jehovah has chosen Jerusalem and by virtue of this election will save the city of His Sanctuary. It is the fact that Jehovah hath chosen Jerusalem, and has returned to her with mercies, which makes the princes of Judah confident in her invincibility.

Zechariah 12:6 "In that day will I make the governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, [even] in Jerusalem."

Two similes describe the operation of God's power: a "firepot" used to carry hot coals to start a wood fire and a "torch" used to light dry grain. Thus, will the power of God devour the armies that attack Israel in the latter days.

That this great deliverance will be all of grace and by the power of God is brought out in the verse that follow:

Zechariah 12:7 "The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify [themselves] against Judah."

"Judah first": God will first deliver the defenseless country people before the well-fortified capital, demonstrating that the battle was not won by military might or strategy.

We see in this, that no one will have any way to brag about this victory over another. It is God that fights for His people, and destroys their enemies. The tents of Judah will be nearer the battle, but they do not have to fight. God fights for them.

Zechariah 12:8 "In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David [shall be] as God, as the angel of the LORD before them."

The Lord will make the feeble like David, the greatest soldier in Israel's history (1 Sam. 18:7). And the "house of David," like the "angel of the Lord," are most likely references to the Messiah Himself, who will be the strength of His people.

Not only shall Jehovah Himself go forth and fight against those nations, but when once the weak and broken remnant of the people recognize their Divine Savior and hears the shout of the King in their midst, they are suddenly filled with superhuman strength.

The feeblest of them, he that stumbleth or the one so weak that he could not stand much less fight, shall in the day be as David when he fought Goliath.

1 Samuel 17:45 "Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." David's strength, and theirs, was actually the strength of the Lord in them.

1 Corinthians 1:25 "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

Zechariah 12:9 "And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."

(See note on 12:2 for important cross references).

This is possibly, speaking of the time when the armies of many nations come against Jerusalem in the battle of Armageddon. God, Himself, destroys these nations.

The expression "seek to do" is always used in the bible "of seeking to do what it is a person's set purpose to do if he can." Man may seek to do a thing and fail, but "woe indeed to those who Almighty God shall seek to destroy". For that on which His Heart is once set He will surely accomplish, whether it be in blessing on His people or in vengeance on His enemies.

Verses 12:10 – 13:1: John applies (verse 10), to the smitten Christ (John 19:37). These verses contrast Israel's treatment of the Messiah at His first advent, when He was rejected and slain, and their treatment of Him at His second advent, when He will be received and exalted.

Zechariah 12:10 "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for [his] only [son], and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for [his] firstborn."

"I will pour": God, in His own perfect time and by His own power, will sovereignly act to save Israel. This was prophesied by other prophets (Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28-32), and by the Apostle Paul (Rom. 11:25-27).

"Spirit of grace and of supplications": The Holy Spirit is so identified because He brings saving grace and because that grace produces sorrow that will result in repentant prayer to God for forgiveness (Matt. 5:4; Heb. 10:29).

"Look upon me whom they have pierced": Israel's repentance will come because they look to Jesus, the One whom they rejected and crucified (Isa. 53:5; John 19:37), in faith at the Second Advent (Rom. 11:25-27). When God says they pierced "Me," He is certainly affirming the incarnation of deity, Jesus was God (see note on John 10:30).

This will be the same effect to the Jews as it was to Saul of Tarsus when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus whose experience and history are in many ways of a foreshadow of the history of his people in relation to Christ.

Zechariah 12:11 "In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon."

“Hadadrimmon ... Megiddo”: The bitter mourning of that day is likened to the death of righteous king Josiah at Hadadrimmon in the Megiddo plain (2 Chron. 35:20-24), located northwest of Jerusalem.

His death was the greatest sorrow which had till then befallen Judah, inasmuch as he was “the last hope of the declining Jewish Kingdom, and in his death the last gleam of the sunset of Judah faded into night.

It compares that to the mourning that went on in Jerusalem over the crucifixion of Christ. All Christians will remember that forever. The sad thing is the fact, that those who asked for His crucifixion will never forget it either. Their mourning over their sins is great. They crucified the Lord of all the earth.

Verses 12-14: The royal (David and his son Nathan), and priestly (Levi and his grandson Shimei), lines, which in the past had set an evil example, were foremost in their contrition and mourning (Num. 3:17-21; 2 Sam. 5:14). It is possible that (Isaiah 53:1-9), comprises the content of their confession.

This mourning and deep penitence is not some corporate emotion, but each person individually is brought to sorrow and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (see note on Rev. 11:13).

Zechariah 12:12 "And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;"

"And the land shall mourn": That is, the inhabitants of it. Not only Jerusalem, but the land of Judea, and the people in it everywhere. In the Talmud it is said, this is the mourning of the Messiah, that is, on his account.

"Every family apart": Though the mourning will be general and public, yet it will be not in a body of the whole people together, but separate and distinct.

"The family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart": The men by themselves, and the women by themselves, which is according to the custom of the Jews in public worship. Those that belong to the family of David shall mourn because of the Jews' long rejection of the King Messiah, Jesus the son of David, the Savior, whom God raised up of his seed.

Not of Nathan the son of David, the brother of Solomon, as some think; for, as Aben Ezra observes, he and his family are comprehended in the family of David.

But of Nathan the prophet, who will mourn because the Jews have so much slighted Jesus the great Prophet, the Lord raised up in Israel, his doctrines and ordinances.

The mourning spoken of in these last 3 scriptures will pervade every family from the royal and the priestly lines to the lowest of families.

Zechariah 12:13 "The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart;"

"The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart": Because of the contempt of the priestly office of Christ, which theirs prefigured, and was abolished by him; because of their trampling upon his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice.

"The family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart": The Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions read "the family of Simeon"; mentioned together with Levi, as brethren in iniquity, and now mourn for the common concern they had in the crucifixion of Christ, and their refusal of him.

The two aristocratic and privileged lines, the ruler and the priests, who in times past often set an evil example to the whole nation, will now be foremost in their self contrition and mourning over the great national sin. Their example for good will now also be followed by all the rest of the people.

Zechariah 12:14 "All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart."

"All the families that remain": That will be in being in those times.

"Every family apart, and their wives apart": For the whole nation shall be born at once, and converted, and all Israel shall be saved (Isa. 66:8).

Not only are families spoken of as mourning apart from families, but individuals compelled by the deep sorrow which shall overwhelm them shall weep apart by themselves.

Even husbands shall mourn apart from their wives and wives apart from their husbands because each individual will be overwhelmed with their own individual share in the guilt of having slain their Messiah.

As it is with the individual Jew, so it is with the individual Gentile. We all share in the guilt of Christ's crucifixion because of our common sin, so also may all have their share in the salvation which comes through a penitent look of faith on Him whom we have pierced.

Zechariah Chapter 12 Questions

1. Who will protect Jerusalem?
2. What causes their enemies to tremble?

3. Who is verse 3 speaking of?
4. What supernatural thing is done, in verse 4, to confuse them?
5. What does it cause them to do?
6. What does the governor of Judah suddenly realize?
7. The gates of ____ shall not prevail against the church (Zion).
8. The LORD of hosts shall save the tents of _____ first.
9. He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as _____.
10. What is this speaking of?
11. The foolishness of God is _____ than men.
12. What is verse 10 speaking of?
13. What was the mourning of Hadadrimmon for?
14. What are all the people mourning for?
15. How high in government does the mourning go?
16. Why is the priestly family mourning?
17. Who is really responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus?