

Zechariah Chapter 13

The prophet depicts in the last six verses (of chapter 12), of the great national repentance and sorrow of Israel over Him “whom they have pierced,” as the result of the pouring out upon them of the spirit of grace and supplication.

Here we see how that same blessed Spirit, who shall have wrought in them this godly penitential sorrow on account of their great national sin, shall bring them into the experience of forgiveness, and open their eyes to the provision God has made for their justification and cleansing.

Zechariah 13:1 "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."

“House of David ... inhabitants of Jerusalem”:

The totality of cleansing is noted by its effect on both royalty and commoners.

“A fountain ... for sin and for uncleanness”:

A symbolic reference to the means of cleansing and purification through the atoning death of the pierced One (1 John 1:7).

This had direct reference to the New Covenant of (see Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-32; Romans 11:26-29).

So the storm that broke upon Israel for the crime of Calvary and has raged with unmitigated fury for long, tragic centuries; will suddenly end and salvation will turn sin into righteousness in the gladness and glory of the kingdom of Messiah Jesus.

“In that day”, is the great day of Israel’s national atonement when the iniquity of that land shall be removed in one day when the whole nation shall as it were, “to be born at once”.

Suddenly the storm that came upon Israel for so many long tragic centuries for the crime of Calvary will end and salvation will turn sin into righteousness in the glory of the kingdom of the Messiah Jesus.

The fountain will be opened to the nation because “then the eyes of the blind shall be opened”.

For the first time to behold the Lamb of God, and to perceive the atoning value and efficacy of the offering which He once made for the sins of many.

Chapter 12:10b “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.”

The fountain is introduced as a means of purification from sin and moral uncleanness which is for the whole nation.

This is not for bodily or ceremonial uncleanness but for purification from the guilt and the moral defilement of sin of which bodily uncleanness is often used in the Bible as a figure.

In Ezekiel 36:25 we read: "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols."

Verses 2-6

When Christ returns and cleanses Israel from her defilement, He is also going to cleanse the nation from the deception of false prophets and their demonic religion.

Zechariah 13:2 "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."

"Unclean spirit":

The agents of idolatry are false prophets, but the spiritual power behind it is demonic.

The wicked spirits who energize false prophets are unclean because they hate God and holiness and drive their victims into moral impurities and false religion (Deut. 32:17; 1 Kings 22:19:23; Psalm 106:34-39; 1 Cor. 10:20).

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This scripture can be taken literally so we will concentrate on the phrase "In that day".

The range of the prophetic vision in the last six chapters of Zechariah does not end in the near immediate future but finds its goal in the time of the end.

This is when the great sins of idolatry and false prophecy shall reach their climax with the worship of the beast and his image, and in the "unclean spirits" which shall go forth upon the earth to deceive the anti-Christian nations.

Zechariah 13:3 "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."

Because of the salvation of God which has cleansed God's people and made them love Him and His truth, hatred of false prophecy will overrule normal human feeling, causing even a father and mother to put their own apostate child to death (Deut. 13:6-9; 12-15; Deut. 18:18-22).

This is a stern reminder of how God feels about and will eventually treat those preachers who misrepresent the truth.

Even if it should be their own son who should presumptuously "prophecy", either to entice them from their allegiance to Jehovah or to spread error in His Name, his own parents will not spare or pity him.

But his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through (pierced).

Zeal for Jehovah and His law will be so strong as to overmaster even parental affection; the people themselves would stop short at nothing in order utterly to exterminate the evil, should it be possible once again to assert itself.

Verses 4-5

"A rough garment":

Because of these stern measures, false prophets will cease wearing the traditional clothing of a prophet (2 Kings 1:8; Matt. 3:4).

They will adopt a clandestine approach to propagating their demon inspired lies (Jer. 22:22; Mica 3:7), and lie if they are asked whether they are prophets, claiming to be farmers.

Zechariah 13:4 "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:"

He shall be ashamed of the doctrines he has delivered, they will appear to all men so ridiculous and absurd.

As the doctrines of merit, and the works of supererogation (the performance of more work than duty requires).

And purgatory (in Roman Catholic doctrine), a place or state of suffering inhabited by the souls of sinners who are expiating their sins before going to heaven.

Of pardons (the action of forgiving or being forgiven for an error or offense).

Penance (voluntary self-punishment inflicted as an outward expression of repentance for having done wrong), etc.

"Neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive":

Or, "a hairy garment"; such as the first and ancient inhabitants of the earth wore, who used the skins of beasts for covering, as Diodorus Siculus observes.

And Pausanias says of the first natives of Locris, not knowing how to weave and make garments, used to cover their bodies, to preserve them from the cold, with the undressed skins of beasts, turning the hair outward, as more becoming.

And such a hairy garment, or much like it, Elijah wore.

Hence, he is called a hairy man (2 Kings 1:8), and John the Baptist, who came in the power and spirit of that prophet, appeared in a like habit, clothed with camel's hair (Matt. 3:4).

And in like manner good men, especially in times of distress and trouble, used to wander about in sheepskins and goatskins (Heb. 11:37), which seem to be the same sort of raiment.

And now, in imitation of such like good men, and true prophets of the Lord, particularly Elijah.

The false prophets, as Jarchi and Kimchi observe, in order to deceive the people, and pass for true prophets, put on such rough and hairy garments, as if they were very humble and self-denying men.

Braunius thinks the prophet may have respect to a custom among the idolatrous prophets, who used to clothe themselves with the skins of the sacrifices.

And lie on them in their temples, in order to obtain dreams, and be able to foretell future things (of which see Amos 2:8).

But it seems to have respect to the habits of the monks and friars, and of the different orders by which they are distinguished as religious persons, and gain respect and reverence among men.

And under the guise of sanctity and devotion, and of a strict and embarrassed life, impose their lies and deceptions upon them.

But now will lay their habits aside, as being ashamed of their profession and principles.

The rough garment may have been camel's hair or possibly had been made of un-tanned skins.

This had been an outward show in olden days that he was a prophet.

This was not only the outward sign of "the strict course of life and abstinence from worldly pleasures".

"The thriftiness alike in food and attire", which marked the true prophets of Jehovah.

But also it was the symbol of grief and mourning for the sins of the nation, and the consequent judgments which they were commissioned to announce.

This is speaking of a time, when men will be afraid and ashamed to give a prophecy for fear the people would ridicule them.

It also appears, they do not want to be recognized as a prophet, so they cease to wear the prophet's garment.

Zechariah having shown the opposition which would be exhibited by the Jewish nation to the false prophets.

Who were the chief cause of Israel's national undoing in the past, is showing why the prophets will be ashamed.

First, by the hypothetical instance of a son who should venture to prophecy falsely, then being slain by his own parents (in verse 3).

Secondly by the general statement the pretended prophets would themselves be ashamed of their evil profession and seek in every way to avert suspicion that they ever had to do with such evil practices with a view to deceive the people.

He then proceeds in the next two verses still more fully to illustrate the condition of the time.

Zechariah 13:5 "But he shall say, I [am] no prophet, I [am] a husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth."

"But he shall say, I am no prophet":

That he is not of the Romish clergy, (relating to the Roman Catholic Church), or of any of their religious orders, having laid aside his habit.

"I am a husbandman":

He shall put on the habit of a husbandman, and work for his bread.

For he will not be able to support himself, as before, with the sale of pardons and indulgences, and by praying souls out of purgatory.

For no man hereafter will buy of his merchandise (Rev. 18:11).

And he will be ashamed of his former calling and traffic, and will not own that he was ever concerned therein.

But will affirm that he was never of the Romish clergy, but always a layman, and employed in husbandry.

"For man taught me to keep cattle from my youth":

He will say he was brought up to husbandry, or in some mechanic business, from his youth.

And never was in any convent or monastery, or of any religious order.

It may be rendered, "for man made me to work from my youth"; and is not to be restrained to keeping cattle, or any particular employment.

Now the false prophet, when accused with exercising the functions of a prophet, utterly denies the charge by stating that he is not at all likely to have performed the functions of a prophet seeing that he is only a simple farmer from his youth.

Zechariah 13:6 "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."

“Wounds in thine hands”:

The phrase cannot refer to Messiah, but is a continuation of the false prophet’s behavior (in verses 4-5).

When the false prophet denies any association with pagan practices, others will challenge him to explain the suspicious wounds on his body.

False prophets would cut themselves to arouse prophetic ecstasy in idolatrous rites (Lev. 19:28; Deut. 14:1; 1 King 18:28; Jer. 16:6; 48:37), but they will claim the scars represent some attack they suffered from friends.

When the false prophet denies any association with pagan practices, others will challenge him to explain the suspicious wounds on his body.

Such rites were sometimes observed even where Jehovah was acknowledged to be the highest object of adoration.

In the idolatrous court of Ahab there were hundreds of false prophets whose established custom was prophesying in the Name of Jehovah.

Yet at the same court priests and prophets of Baal cut themselves with knives and lancets until blood gushed out upon them, in order to procure answers from the god.”

Verses 13:7-9

Zechariah turned from the false prophets wounded in “friends” houses to the true prophet wounded in the house of His friends, Israel.

He compressed events of both the First (13:7), and Second (13:8-9), Advents into this brief section.

It spoke of Christ's crucifixion (verse 7), and the Jewish remnant at His second coming (see verses 8-9).

Zechariah 13:7 "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."

The "sword" is the symbol of judicial power (Rom. 13:4), and indicates the power that God has entrusted to human government.

"My shepherd":

This is a reference to Jesus, the Messiah.

He is the true Shepherd, unlike the false shepherds on who God's wrath fell (11:8).

In (11:17), it was the worthless shepherd who was to be struck; now it is the Good Shepherd (12:10), whose death was designed by God from before the foundation of the world (Isa. 53:10; Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 18:20).

"Sheep ... scattered":

See notes on Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27), where Jesus applies this prophecy to the disciples who defected from Him after His arrest (Matt. 26:56; Mark 14:50), including Peter's denial (Matt. 26:33-35; 69-75).

"The little ones":

The same as the "afflicted of the flock" (11:7).

The reference is to the remnant of believers, among the Jews, who were faithful to the Messiah after His crucifixion.

Turning God's hand "against" them could mean they would suffer persecution, which they did (John 18:18, 20; 16:2; James 1:1), or it could be translated "upon" and refer to God's protection of the faithful.

The Shepherd of Jehovah, whom the sword is to smite, is no other than the Messiah, who is also identified with Jehovah (in chapter 10:10).

Or the Good Shepherd, who says of Himself, "I and My Father are One" (John 10:30).

The term “my fellow” means “my nearest one” implies much more than mere appointment to this office.

God is speaking of the True Shepherd, that mighty Man who is His intimate associate, thus He identified Christ as His co-equal, affirming the deity of Christ.

“Smite the Shepherd” took place at Calvary at Christ’s crucifixion.

The immediate smiting of the Shepherd caused the sheep to be scattered.

The flock that was scattered is not the human race nor the Christian Church as some would have us think, but it is the Jewish nation.

Those people which the Good Shepherd was appointed to feed, (according to chapter 11 verses 1-14), but who because of their willful adamancy, (meaning resoluteness by virtue of being unyielding and inflexible), are designated “sheep of slaughter”.

“The little ones”:

The same as the “poor of the flock” (in chapter 11:7).

The reference is to the remnant of believers, among the Jews, who were faithful to the Messiah after His crucifixion.

Turning God’s hand “against” them could mean they would suffer persecution, which they did, or it could be translated “upon” and refer to God’s protection of the faithful.

Zechariah 13:8 "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."

“Two parts ... third”:

Only a portion of the people of Israel will remain faithful to Christ and be alive in the end.

The spiritual survivors will be the remnant who look upon Christ in repentance at His return (12:10 – 13:1).

Which will include those who make up the 144,000 (Rev. 7:4).

The third will be the sheep of the sheep-goat judgment after Christ’s return who enter the kingdom alive (Isa. 35:10; Jer. 30:11; Matt. 25:31-46).

“Two parts ... one part”:

Only a portion of the people of Israel will remain faithful to Christ and be alive in the end.

The spiritual survivors will be the remnant who looks upon Christ in repentance at His return.

These will be the sheep of the sheep-goat judgment after Christ's return that enters the kingdom alive.

The sad part of this is the fact that the two parts are speaking of the ones who do not accept Jesus as their Savior.

The third would be speaking of those who are not depending on their birthright to save them.

They could be Jew or Gentile who accept Jesus as their Savior.

Zechariah 13:9 "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."

“They shall say”:

From the midst of their fiery refinement, the elect remnant of Israel will see Jesus Christ, their messiah and call on Him as their Savior and Lord.

Israel will thus be saved and restored to covenant relationship with the Lord.

The “refining” and “trying,” or “testing” of even “the third part” or little remnant refers to the remnant in the land at the time of the very end, immediately before their final glorious deliverance.

God will refine them as silver is refined and will try them as gold is tried and shall purge and purify them that they may offer unto Jehovah offerings in righteousness.

From the midst of this fiery furnace of tribulation “they shall call on My Name and I will hear them. The covenant relationship between God and His people, so long interrupted though never broken, is restored again.

The national vow of Israel by which they had made a vow to Jehovah to be their God, to walk in His ways, and ever to hearken to His voice, is now renewed, never to be broken again.

Zechariah Chapter 13 Questions

1. What is the day spoken of in verse 1?
2. What is the fountain, in verse 1, really?

3. What does God do away with, besides the idols?
4. What is the unclean spirit?
5. What do parents do to false prophets?
6. Why did the prophets wear a rough garment?
7. What is verse 5 speaking of?
8. Who is verse 6 speaking of?
9. _____ is the good Shepherd.
10. When was it planned that Jesus would be the substitute for our sins?
11. Who are the two parts speaking of in verse 8?
12. I will bring the third part through the _____.
13. "Silver" symbolizes _____.
14. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the _____ of God.