

Lesson 20

Last week we started Chapter 12, which along with Chapters 13-14 make up the final section of the book of Zechariah. Verse 1 tells us that this final section is directed to Israel. Our question at the end of class was which Israel? Physical Israel or Spiritual Israel.

Last week, we considered and rejected the notion that we are still looking at physical Israel here, and so we were left with the option of spiritual Israel. But what is spiritual Israel? That is where we ended last week.

So what is spiritual Israel? **That definition has never changed!** Spiritual Israel has always been the faithful remnant! That was true in Zechariah's day, and it is true in our day.

Romans 2:29 - **But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly;** and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Galatians 6:16 - And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon **the Israel of God**.

Hebrews 12:22-23 - But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, **the heavenly Jerusalem**, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

Revelation 21:2 - And I John saw the holy city, **new Jerusalem**, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

The only difference between our day and Zechariah's day is that the faithful remnant today is living under the new covenant after Jesus has come in the flesh rather than under the old covenant prior to the incarnation of Christ - but that remnant is still the faithful people of God, and those people have always been spiritual Israel.

How do we know for certain that the focus in these chapters is on spiritual Israel? We will know that for certain as we read the text of these chapters and we will see how this Israel is described and how those descriptions compare with what we read in the New Testament.

What else does verse 1 say? It reminds us of the power of God. God "stretcheth forth the heavens, God layeth the foundation of the earth, and God formeth the spirit of man within him." God tells us all of that for one reason - so that we will listen.

God created us and everything around us, and so as his creation we should listen carefully to our creator. The message that follows will be very important, and God wants us to pay very close attention.

So what then are we about to see in this message? We are about to see four things: a great siege (Zechariah 12:2-9), a great salvation (Zechariah 12:10-13:6), a great smiting (Zechariah 13:7-9), and a great deliverance (Zechariah 14).

Zechariah 12:2

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.

Verse 2 looks like what we saw in the previous section - Judah and Jerusalem are under siege with people arrayed all round about them. But there is a huge difference between verse 2 and what we saw before - with this siege, God will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling to those who would seek to destroy her. Far from rejecting Jerusalem and leaving the city to its fate as we saw before with physical Israel, God says here that he will protect Jerusalem and cause the attackers to tremble.

Verse 2 alone should be enough for us to see that the focus of this section has changed to God's *faithful* people from the *unfaithful* people that were described in the previous section.

Although God's faithful people were not the focus in those previous chapters, they were mentioned in the previous section - they were the poor of the flock that Zechariah was told to feed in 11:7. These final chapters are their story!

But we still have some questions remaining with verse 2 - who has brought this siege, and when?

Remember our time frame - the last chapter ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Who at that time was the great persecutor of the faithful people of God? Rome - the same group that besieged *physical* Israel was also besieging *spiritual* Israel. Nero (prior to AD 70) and Domitian (after AD 70) were, in particular, fierce persecutors of God's people. History tells us that Peter and Paul

were killed by Nero.

Would Rome win? Would the faithful remnant be destroyed? Would God's plans be frustrated? I don't want to give anything away for those who haven't read the book, but the cup of trembling in this verse is a big clue as to how this will all turn out for Rome!

Rome may have thought that the church was just a good glass of fine wine that Rome could quickly enjoy and finish off - but that is not at all what Rome would find. Instead, Rome would find a cup of trembling.

Rome thought that Rome was the eternal kingdom and that the church was just a very small bump in the road, but in fact the opposite was true. Rome was the road bump! And didn't we know that already? What had Daniel said?

Daniel 2:44-45 - And in the days of these kings [*the Roman emperors*] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom [*the church*], which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms [*including Rome*], and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands [*the church*], and that it brake in pieces the iron [*Rome*], the brass, the clay [*also Rome*], the silver, and the gold.

So if we are on the right track with this, then perhaps we should expect to see this spiritual Israel described as a **stone** somewhere in these verses.

Zechariah 12:3

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.

Daniel described the church as a stone that would break Rome into pieces. Verse 3 describes Jerusalem as a stone that would cut in pieces all that gathered against it. Do we need any more evidence than that? This Jerusalem in verse 3 is the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21:2, the bride of Christ. This Jerusalem in verse 3 is the heavenly Jerusalem of Hebrews 12:22. This Jerusalem is the Israel of God in Galatians 6:16. This Jerusalem is the church. And Daniel 2:44-45 and Zechariah 12:3 are saying the same thing about the church - the church would conquer Rome!

And this verse also helps us with our all-important time frame. Notice how verse 3 begins - "in that day." What day? The same day we have been looking at in these chapters, and the same day as in Daniel 2:44 - "in the days of these kings," which pointed to the first century establishment of the church. Zechariah 12:3 is focused on that same time frame - the first century.

And does that surprise us? Are we shocked to see so much focus on the first century?

- Jesus was born in the first century.
- Jesus lived and taught in the first century.
- Jesus died on the cross in the first century.
- Jesus rose from the dead in the first century.
- Jesus ascended back to heaven in the first century.
- The church was established in the first century.
- Jerusalem was destroyed in the first century.
- Rome, the most powerful force on earth, tried to destroy the infant church in the first century.

And all of this was happening as prophesied many years earlier. How can anyone be surprised that the focus here is on the first century?

Notice that last phrase in verse 3 - "though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." Doesn't it seem like that is the case today? Doesn't it seem like the entire world is opposed to God and to his church - and that they have all gathered together against it - against *us*?

Yes, and that has always been the case. But there is only one eternal kingdom, and that one eternal kingdom is not a kingdom of this world (John 18:36). The eternal kingdom is the kingdom of Christ, his church - the church of Christ. The entire world can gather against us, make war against us, vote against us, hurl insults against us, and do whatever they want against us - it will not change the outcome in any way. The church is a burdensome stone that will cut every other kingdom of this world into pieces.

And I love that phrase in verse 3 - "burdensome stone"! We are like a rock in the world's shoe! They can't ignore us, and they can't get rid of us! They may shut their ears and gnash their teeth when the word of God is proclaimed to them, but we will proclaim it! We are the salt of the earth! We are "a burdensome stone for all people"!

Zechariah 12:4

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.

So what else happens in that day? Verse 4 tells us that in that day God will open his eyes upon the house of Judah. That means that God will notice their plight. God will see what is happening to them, he will have compassion on them, and he will come and act on their behalf.

What action will God take? In this verse, God creates confusion among those who seek to harm his people. He confuses the riders and their horses so that they cannot accomplish their intended purpose of harming God's people.

Should we be concerned that God, who is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33), is in this verse creating confusion? Not at all. That statement in 1 Corinthians was directed to the church - "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." God has long used confusion as a punishment. For example, God confused the languages of men back in Genesis 11:9. And David prayed for a judgment of confusion against his enemies.

Psalms 35:4 - Let them be **confounded** and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to **confusion** that devise my hurt.

Isaiah described the difference between those who are God's people and those who are not when it comes to confusion.

Isaiah 45:16-17 - They shall be ashamed, and also **confounded**, all of them: they shall go to **confusion** together that are makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall **not** be ashamed nor **confounded** world without end.

Here in verse 4, God confuses those who seek to harm his people.

Zechariah 12:5-6

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. 6 In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an 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.

The prior verses told us that spiritual Jerusalem would be secure. So what does that security mean for the *leaders* of spiritual Jerusalem? Verse 5 tell us - it means that the leaders are *confident*.

The leaders have strength in the Lord, and that strength comes from the strength of the people they are leading. This is a **very** different picture from what we saw about the leaders in Chapter 11. Those leaders were out only to slaughter and sell the flock. Not so with these leaders. These leaders are working in unity with those they lead, and they are strengthened by those they lead.

Who are these confident leaders? We don't have too many possibilities from which to choose. Either these leaders are the apostles of the first century or they are the elders of any century, or they are both. Those two groups (apostles and elders) are the only earthly leaders of spiritual Israel under the new covenant. The phrase "in that day" that opens verse 6 suggests that the focus here may be on the first century apostolic leaders of the church.

Another possibility is that these governors of Judah are leaders, not of the church, but of the individual families in the church. The Hebrew word translated "governor" can simply mean "leader of a clan." But I prefer the view that the first century apostles or possibly the elders in any century (or both) are being described here.

What does verse 6 tell us about these leaders? They will be "like an 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." What that means is that they will be in a fight, but they will prevail.

But that can't apply to Rome, can it? History tells us that Peter and Paul were killed by Rome. John was exiled by Rome. That means Rome was winning, and the apostles were losing - right? Wrong!

James 1:12 - Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: **for when he is tried**, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Revelation 2:10b - Be thou **faithful unto death**, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Revelation 2:26-27 - **And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end**, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

1 John 5:4 - For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and **this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith**.

Do we believe that? We certainly sing about it.

Encamped along the hills of light, ye Christian soldiers, rise, And press the battle ere the night shall veil the glowing skies. Against the foe in vales below let all our strength be hurled; Faith is the victory, we know, that overcomes the world. His banner over us is love, Our sword the Word of God; We tread the road the saints above With shouts of triumph trod. By faith, they like a whirlwind's breath, Swept on o'er every field; The faith by which they conquered death Is still our shining shield. To him that overcomes the foe, White raiment shall be giv'n; Before the angels he shall know His name confessed in heav'n. Then onward from the hills of light, Our hearts with love aflame, We'll vanquish all the hosts of night, In Jesus' conqu'ring name.

Faith is the victory! Christians conquer this world by remaining faithful to the end. Every day that you live faithfully to God, you are conquering this world. Each time you are tempted and tried, yet stand firm in your faithfulness to God, you are conquering this world. "Against the foe in vales below let all our strength be hurled; Faith is the victory, we know, that overcomes the world."

Never doubt for a second that the church of Christ conquered the mighty Roman empire! Daniel said it would happen, and Zechariah said it would happen. It happened!

And what of those who were conquered? Their world would be destroyed, and they would be eternally lost. No worse defeat could be imagined.

And the church? Read the end of verse 6: "Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem." The church would not be harmed. The church would not be moved. The church is the eternal kingdom that destroys the kingdoms of this world, not vice versa!

Hebrews 12:28-29 - Wherefore we receiving a kingdom **which cannot be moved**, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: **For our God is a consuming fire.**

Amen! That's the message of verse 6!

Zechariah 12:7

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.

The next few verses tell us more about God's deliverance of his people in that day. The focus here is on the first century deliverance from the hands of Rome, but the description could apply to any deliverance by God of his people at any time. This is how God always delivers and protects his faithful people!

What does it mean that God would save the tents of Judah first? The poorest and most vulnerable people lived in tents. They usually didn't have the protection of the city, perhaps even living outside the walls of the city. If anyone perished in the conflict, it would be the people who were living in tents.

But verse 7 says that, not only will they *not* perish, they will be the *first* people God protects! God is not going to protect first those who are the richest and most powerful, but rather God will protect first those who are the poorest and most vulnerable. That's very different from how most kings operate!

Why does God do this? Verse 7 answers that question. God does this so that "the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah." That is, God does this to teach the rich and powerful an important lesson - God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). Not only is there no difference between Jew and Greek in his kingdom, there is also no difference between rich and poor. There are no dividing walls inside the kingdom of God (Ephesians 2:14).

And another lesson we see here is that God's kingdom is not run like the kingdoms of men. Earthly kingdoms almost always put the interests of the rich and powerful over those of the poor and powerless. Not so with God's kingdom.

James 2:1-5 - My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

That is the message of verse 7. When God delivers his people, he does not start first with the rich and the powerful. God starts first with the poor and the powerless.

Zechariah 12:8

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.

Verse 8 tells us something else about how God delivers his people. God strengthens them so that they can do mighty things on his behalf.

Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

That is the message of verse 8. On our own we are feeble, but through Christ we can be as King David. Through Christ we can topple even the mighty Goliath, and that is just what happened when the church in its infancy came up against the mighty Goliath called Rome. Rome, no doubt, was just as confident as Goliath, but Rome fell just as Goliath fell. And I suspect that both Goliath and Rome fell with a look of total shock and surprise on their faces!

Who would have predicted such an outcome? Daniel did. Zechariah did. When God says that something will happen, then that's the end of it - that thing will happen. No matter how unlikely it may seem from human eyes, it becomes an absolute certainty as soon as God declares it so.

The "house of David" in verse 8 is the church, and the promise is that the church "shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them." As we have discussed many times, the Angel of the Lord here is

most likely a reference to Christ, who, as God the Son, is a divine messenger from God the Father.

If we are ever tempted to doubt the *power* of the church, the *strength* of the church, the *importance* of the church, or the *beauty* of the church - then we need to read verse 8. The church of Christ shall be as God and as Christ! And that shouldn't surprise us in the least.

The church of Christ is the *body* of Christ (Colossians 1:18)! The church is "the habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22). God hears and answers the prayers of the church (James 5:16). And what can prayer accomplish? Prayer according to God's will can accomplish anything that God can accomplish!

1 John 5:14-15 - And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Never doubt the power of the praying church! That is how mountains are moved!

Matthew 17:20 - If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

And is that how God delivered his people from Rome? Revelation 8:8 describes Rome as a "great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea." God moved the mountain of Rome because of the prayers of the saints (Revelation 6:10).

But then verse 8 sounds like the church has God-like powers - is that true? Of course it's true! That's how prayer works! We ask in faith, and God responds.

Psalms 82:6 - Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.

John 10:34-35 - Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken.

The church is powerful! We have the power of God and of Christ. God dwells in us, the body of his son. How could we ever doubt the *power* of the Lord's church? The church is the most powerful organization on earth, and that has been true ever since the day the church was established in Acts 2. That is the message of verse 8.

Zechariah 12:9

9 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Notice the key phrase in verse 9 - "in that day." Verse 9 confirms our first century time frame. This verse is not looking at the end of the world but is instead looking at the first century. How do we know that? Because Zechariah 12:9 is once again saying the same thing we see in Daniel 2:44.

Daniel 2:44 - And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

The phrase "in that day" here in verse 9 is the same as "in the days of these kings" in Daniel 2:44. Which kings are they? The emperors of Rome, the fourth kingdom made of iron and clay in Daniel 2 that followed Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece.

Verse 9 is a wonderful promise for the church! No kingdom of this earth will ever destroy the church! But instead they will all be conquered by the eternal kingdom of Christ.

But how does the church conquer those earthly kingdoms? Not with carnal weapons.

2 Corinthians 10:4 - For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.

We conquer those earthly kingdoms by remaining faithful unto death.

1 John 5:4 - For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Revelation 2:10 - Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

The church conquered Rome by remaining faithful unto death, and that is how we will conquer the vast array of worldly forces that daily seek to overthrow our faith.

Is that how the world sees victory? Is that how we see victory? How can victory involve death?

Doesn't death mean defeat? We can answer that question with another question - was Jesus defeated

at the cross?

Colossians 2:14-15 - Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Jesus triumphed over his enemies at the cross, and we likewise triumph over our enemies by remaining faithful unto death. That is how we obtain the crown of life.

God delivers his faithful people through their faith. And the kingdom of God's faithful people will destroy and outlast every kingdom of this world. That is the message of Daniel 2:44, and that is the message of Zechariah 12:9.

If there is any doubt that we are reading about the church in these verses or that the time frame of these verses is the first century, those doubts should completely go away with the next verse.

Zechariah 12:10

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.

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications." When did that happen? Did that happen in the first century or is that something reserved for the end of the world? Let's listen as Peter answers that exact question.

Acts 2:16-17 - But **this is that** which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.

Did you hear him? "This is that." *This*, the first gospel sermon preached on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, is *that*, the fulfillment of the prophecy from Joel that God would pour out his spirit upon all flesh. That is the same prophecy we see here in Zechariah 12:10.

So the question for the premillennialists is simple - *is this that, or is this not that?* Peter says *this is that* - and for those who believe the word of God, that is that!

We are looking here at a first century event. And the second half of verse 10 confirms it - "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." When did that happen? We once again have an inspired answer as to the date of that prophecy's fulfillment.

John 19:33-37 - But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. **And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.**

Is someone really going to tell me that all of Zechariah 12 is talking about the end of the world except for the second half of verse 10? Does that make any sense at all?

And notice something wonderful about the prophecy in verse 10 - "and they shall look upon **me** whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for **him**." Did you see it? They shall look upon **me** whom they have pierced - and they shall mourn for **him**. They pierced God the Father when they pierced God the Son!

But verse 10 says that those who pierced Christ would mourn for him - did the Romans soldiers mourn for Christ? The Roman soldiers did not, but verse 10 doesn't say that they would. Those who mourn in verse 10 are those that **look** on the one who was pierced. And those who *look* upon the one who was pierced are those who look at him and understand who he is and understand what caused him to die on that cross.

We see a wonderful example of this looking in the same chapter from Acts that we read from a moment ago - Acts 2.

Acts 2:36-37 - Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

In verse 36 of Acts 2, they *looked* upon the one whom they pierced, and in verse 37 they *mourned* because of what they saw. That's the same sequence of events that we see here in verse 10.

#Zechariah