

The Minor Prophets
Lesson 32: Redeemed, Refined and Restored
(Zechariah 12—14)

In this second oracle, Zechariah takes us to the end times. He describes the Gentile nations attacking Jerusalem, the Jews experiencing severe trials (“the times of Jacob’s trouble”), and then the Lord returning in power and great glory to deliver His people and establish the promised kingdom. What an exciting scenario it is! But it isn’t fiction, it’s God’s own Word, and it will come to pass.

As you study these three chapters, note the repetition of the phrase “in that day,” which is found sixteen times. “That day” is “the day of the Lord,” the day of wrath and judgment that the prophets wrote about (Joel 3:9-16; Zeph. 1), and Jesus described in Matthew 24:4-31 and John in Revelation 6—19.

Zechariah describes three Key events.

1. The Lord Will Deliver Jerusalem (12:-9; 14:1-7, 12-15)

Jerusalem is mentioned fifty-two times in the book of Zechariah, and twenty-two of these references are in the final three chapters. In the first chapter of his prophecy, Zechariah told us that God was “jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy” (1:14). This statement reveals the yearning heart of a loving Father for His firstborn (Ex. 4:22) and the desire of a faithful Husband for His unfaithful bride (Jer. 2:2; 3:2). God’s timing isn’t always what we would have planned, but He is wiser than we are and will keep His promises to Israel.

- a. **Jerusalem will be attacked (12:1-3; 14:1-2).** The oracle opens with an affirmation of God’s sovereignty and power. If we look above us, we see the heavens He created; if we look beneath us, we see the earth that He founded; and if we look within, we find the spirit that He formed. The God of creation is the God who cares for us!
 - i. Note the emphasis on “all nations” and “all peoples” (Zech. 12:2-3, 6, 9; 14:2, 12, 14, 16), for this attack involves the armies of the whole world and is part of the famous “battle of Armageddon” described in Joel 3:9-16; Matthew 24:27-30; and Revelation 9:13-18, 16:12-16, and 19:17-21. Three forces are involved in the gathering of this great army:
 1. The nations agree to cooperate in their fight against God and His people (Ps. 2:1-3).
 2. Satan uses demonic powers to influence the nations to gather (Rev. 16:13-15).
 3. The Lord exercises His sovereign powers in gathering them (Zech. 14:2; Rev. 16:16).
 - ii. To describe Jerusalem’s situation “in that day”, Zechariah used the images of a cup and a stone. A cup is a familiar biblical image for judgment. The nations plan to “swallow up” Jerusalem, but when they begin to “drink the cup,” its contents make them sick and drunk! History shows that every nation that has ever tried to destroy the Jews has itself been destroyed. It will be no different when the nations collectively attack God’s chosen people.
 - iii. Some of the enemy soldiers will enter the city, loot it, abuse the women, and take half of the inhabitants captive. But the Gentiles’ hopes of destroying the city and the nation

will be disappointed, for the Lord will make Jerusalem like an immovable rock that won't yield. This stone will eventually cut the invading armies to pieces.

- b. The Lord will visibly appear (14:3-7).** Our Lord ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9—12), and when He returns to earth, He will stand on the Mount of Olives and cause a great earthquake to change the terrain (Isa. 29:6; Rev. 16:18-19). This will create a new valley that will provide an escape route for many of the people. There will also be changes in the heavens so that the day will be neither light nor darkness, morning nor evening (see Isa. 60:19-20).
- i. "The LORD is a man of war," sang the Jews after they were delivered from Egypt (Ex. 15:3), but this aspect of Christ's character and ministry is ignored, if not opposed, by people today. In their quest for world peace, some denominations have removed the "militant song" from their hymnals, so that a new generation is growing up knowing nothing about "fighting the good fight" or worshipping a Savior who will one day meet the nations of the world in battle (Rev. 19:11-12).
 - ii. Before the nation entered the Promised Land, Moses promised them that the Lord would fight for them (Deut. 1:30; 3:22). "Who is this King of Glory?" asked David, and his answer was, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle" (Ps. 24:8). Our God has been longsuffering toward the nations, but one day He will meet them in battle and triumph over them.
- c. The Lord will defeat the enemy (12:4-9; 14:12-15).** Panic, a plague, and special power given to the Jewish warriors (Zech. 12:8) are the means God will use to conquer the invading armies. The horses will panic in their blindness, and the riders will be possessed by madness and end up fighting each other. God will watch over His people and see to it that they are delivered. He will make the Jews to be like fire and their enemies like dry stubble. Jesus Christ will demonstrate His great power as He defends His people and defeats His enemies.
- i. While the inhabitants of Jerusalem are central in this account, special notice is given to the part Judah will play in the battle. For the invaders to get to Jerusalem, they must march through Judah (12:2), but the Lord will keep watch over the people of Judah and deliver them for David's sake (vv. 4-7). The faith and courage of the people in Jerusalem will encourage Judah to wax valiant in the fight, and God will enable them to conquer (vv. 5-6).

2. The Lord Will Cleanse Israel (12:10—13:9)

In delivering Israel from her enemies, our Lord's ultimate goal is more than their national preservation, for their spiritual restoration is uppermost in His heart. He wants to reveal Himself to them and establish the kind of relationship that was impossible in previous centuries because of their unbelief.

- a. The people will repent (12:10-14).** Repentance isn't something we work up ourselves; it's a gift from God as we hear His Word and recognize His grace (Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25). God will pour out the Spirit upon Israel (Joel 2:28-29), and the people will realize their sins and call out to God for forgiveness. They will also see their Messiah whom the nation pierced and will put their faith in Him. Forgiveness comes to any believing sinner only through faith in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.
- i. The nation will go into mourning, the way parents would mourn over the loss of their only son, the way the nation mourned near Megiddo when their beloved King Josiah was slain in battle (2 Chron. 35:20-27).

- ii. Zechariah mentions that all families (clans) of Israel will mourn, the men and women separately, and this will include royalty (David's clan), the prophets (Nathan's clan; see 2 Sam. 7), and the priest (Levi's and Shimei's clan; Num. 3:17-18, 21).
 - iii. "All families that remain" covers the rest of the nation. It will be a time of deep and sincere national repentance such as has not been seen before.
- b. The nation will be cleansed (13:1-7).** Isaiah had admonished the nation, "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doing from before My eyes" (Isa. 1:16 NKJV), but they refused to listen. Jeremiah had also pleaded with his people (Jer. 4:14 NKJV).
- i. But now, in response to Israel's repentance and faith, the Lord will wash them clean! This forgiveness is part of the new covenant that God promised to His people (Jer. 31:31-34): "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (v. 34 NIV).
 - ii. William Cowper based his hymn "There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood" on Zechariah 13:1, for it's the sacrifice of Christ that atones for sin. The Jews could cleanse their external ceremonial uncleanness by washing in water, but for internal cleansing, the sinful hearts of men and women can be cleansed only by the blood of the Savior (Lev. 16:30; 17:11).
 - iii. Not only will their hearts be cleansed, but the land itself will be purged of all that is deceitful and defiling. The idols and false prophets—two of Israel's besetting sins—will be removed, as well as the very "unclean spirit" that caused people to turn from God.
 - iv. According to the law, false prophets were to be killed (Deut. 13), so the false prophets in that day will lie about their occupations in order to save their lives. They will not wear their special garments, and they'll claim to be farmers rather than prophets. If asked about the scars on their bodies, actually caused by wounds inflicted while worshipping idols, they will lie and say friends or family inflicted the wounds to discipline them.
 - v. In contrast to the false prophet, the true Shepherd is presented in Zechariah 13:7. Jesus quoted part of this prophecy when He was on His way to Gethsemane with His disciples (Matt. 26:31), and He referred to it again when He was arrested in the garden (v. 56).
 - vi. The Jews had smitten their Shepherd on the cross (Isa. 53:10), and this act of rejection led to the nation being scattered.
- c. The nation will be refined (13:8-9).** This image reminds us of the value God puts on His people Israel: They are like gold and silver that need to be refined in the furnace of affliction. This has been their experience in Egypt (Deut. 4:20) and in Babylon (Isa. 48:10), but "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7) will be their most difficult "furnace experience."
- i. The goldsmith refines the gold or silver so that the dross may be removed, and that's what the tribulation in the last days will accomplish for Israel. One third of the people will be spared, the true believing remnant, while the rest will be rejected and perish.
 - ii. That godly remnant who called on the Lord (Acts 2:21) will be saved and become the nucleus of the promised kingdom, for the Lord will acknowledge them as His own people.

Before we leave this section, we need to see the spiritual application for God's people today. Certainly, the church is a defiled people who need to repent and be cleansed, and the promise of forgiveness is still valid (1 John 1:9). God often has to put us through the furnace of suffering before we'll call on Him and seek His face (Heb. 12:3-11; 1 Peter 4:12). If God's people will follow the instructions of 2 Chron. 7:14, the Lord will cleanse and bless the church and bring healing to the land.

3. The Lord Reigns Over All The Earth (14:8-11,16-21)

“And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name is one” (v. 9). After the nations have been punished and Israel has been purified, the Lord will establish His righteous kingdom and reign on David’s throne (Luke 1:32-22; Rev. 17:14). His reign will be universal (“over all the earth”), He will be the only God worshipped, and His name will be the only name honored (see Ps. 72; Jer. 30:7-9). What will happen when the king reigns supremely?

- a. **The land will be healed (v. 8).** Jerusalem is the only great city of antiquity that wasn’t built near a large river. But during the kingdom age, a river of “living waters” will flow from Jerusalem and bring healing and fertility to the land. The river will divide so the waters can flow to the Dead Sea and to the Mediterranean Sea. For centuries people have been wondering how the Dead Sea could be rescued, but it won’t be accomplished until the kingdom age. Read Isaiah 35 for a beautiful description of the land.
- b. **The topography will be changed (vv. 10-11).** Besides the changes caused by the earthquake at Christ’s return (vv. 4-5), two other changes will occur: (1) the land around Jerusalem will be lowered and leveled and become a plain, and (2) Jerusalem itself will be raised above the land around it. These changes will be fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountains of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it” (Isa. 2:2 NKJV; and see Zech. 8:1-3; Mic. 4:1-3).
 - i. If Messiah is to reign as King-Priest (Zech. 6:9-15), then there must be a temple and a priesthood during the kingdom age, and it is described in detail in Ezekiel 40—48. Jerusalem will be the most important city on earth and the temple area the most important part of that glorious new city.
- c. **All danger will be removed (v. 11).** The mountains round about Jerusalem were for her protection (Ps. 48:1-8; 125:1-2), but now that Messiah is reigning, the city no longer faces danger from enemy invasion. “It will be inhabited” (NIV) reminds us that only fifty thousand Jews were willing to leave the safe and comfortable city of Babylon to live in the ruins of Jerusalem, and even Nehemiah had trouble getting people to live in the city (Neh. 11). Zechariah has already told us that the children will play in the streets, and the old men and women will sit in the sun and talk together (Zech. 8:4-8).
- d. **The Gentiles will worship at Jerusalem (v. 16).** Israel will have a ministry to the Gentiles who will trust the true and living God and come to Jerusalem to worship at His temple (Isa. 2:2-5; Zech. 2:10-13). Of the seven annual feasts listed in Leviticus 23, the Feast of Tabernacles is the only one that will be celebrated during the kingdom age. This feast commemorated the nation’s wilderness wanderings, but it also was a time of rejoicing at the bountiful blessings of the Lord during the harvest (v. 40).
 - i. But why celebrate only the Feast of Tabernacles? Archaeologist Merrill Unger makes an excellent suggestion when he points out that the Feast of Tabernacles is the only one of the seven feasts of Leviticus 23 that will not have been fulfilled when the kingdom is established.
 - ii. Passover was fulfilled in the death of Christ (1 Cor. 5:7; John 1:29), firstfruits in His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:23), and the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread in the life of the church today as believers walk in holiness (5:6-8). Pentecost was fulfilled

- in Acts 2, and the Feast of Trumpets will be fulfilled before the kingdom begins when God regathers His people from the ends of the earth. Atonement will be fulfilled when the nation sees her Messiah, repents, and is cleansed.
- iii. But the Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows the joyful and fruitful kingdom age, so it will be celebrated while the kingdom is in progress.
 - iv. It will be an annual reminder to the Gentile nations that the beautiful blessings they enjoy come from a gracious and generous Lord.
- e. The Lord will exercise justice (vv. 17-19).** The nations that don't send their representatives to Jerusalem to worship will be disciplined by getting no rain for their land. This is the way God disciplined Israel when she refused to obey Him (Deut. 28:22-24). Remember, though the millennium is a time of peace and blessing, it is also a time when Jesus will reign over all the earth "with a rod of iron" and will judge disobedience. Not to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles will be tantamount (as serious as) despising the blessings of the Lord, and this is a serious transgression (see Rom. 1:18).
- i. Egypt is mentioned specifically because that nation especially depended on the annual flooding of the Nile for irrigation, and without the rains the river would not rise. During the time of Joseph, there were seven years of terrible famine in Egypt.
 - ii. Also, Egypt had been Israel's persecutor and enemy, and during the kingdom, she will enjoy blessing because of Israel's Messiah. Not to show gratitude would be a heinous sin.
- f. Holiness will characterize all of life (vv. 20-21).** We might expect "holiness" to be written on the bells of the high priest's robe (Ex. 28:36-38), but certainly not on the bells worn by the horses! And why would the common utensils in the home be treated like vessels used in the temple?" These two images are God's way of saying, "In the kingdom age every aspect of life will be holy to the Lord." God called Israel to be "a kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6), and now they would be just that by God's grace.
- i. For the believer today, this is the Old Testament version of 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (NKJV). There is no "secular" or "sacred" in the Christian life, because everything comes from God and should be used for His glory.
 - ii. The Hebrew word translated "Canaanite" in Zechariah 14:21 refers to merchants and traders or any unclean person, both of whom would defile the temple of God. When Jesus began His ministry and ended it, he found "religious merchants" using God's house for personal gain. The house of prayer for all nations had been turned into a den of thieves for the profit of the Jewish high priest and his family.
 - iii. But the millennial temple will be a holy temple, not defiled by those who neither know the Lord nor love Him, and in it a holy priesthood will serve the Lord.

Zechariah's book begins with a call to repentance but ends with a vision of a holy nation and a glorious kingdom. Zechariah was one of God's heroes who ministered at a difficult time and in a difficult place, but he encouraged God's people by showing them visions of what God has planned for their future. God is still jealous over Jerusalem and the Jewish people, and He will fulfill His promises. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Ps. 122:6)