Israel's Final Deliverance
Zechariah 12:1-14
2169

We come to the twelfth chapter and the subject is a subject that's not new to us in the book of Zechariah, it's a rather familiar theme and yet Zechariah comes at it in a very, very different way. It's the theme of Israel's final deliverance and salvation. All the way through the book of Zechariah this has been predicted. This has been prophesied. This has been anticipated and hoped for and now we find a description of its coming to pass.

Now this is not something that's really in the abstract for us who live today in this particular age because we can really see all around us the coming together of the fulfillment of prophecy as it relates to Israel. I imagine if we had been living a hundred years ago this would seem somewhat obscure. But in our life time since 1948, the eyes of the world have focused on that little plot of ground that is known as Israel. It has drawn the attention of the world because of its amazing existence and because of its amazing sanctification, as it were. And I mean that in the sense of being set apart. It seems to be undefeatable, or indomitable, it exists as an island in a sea all around it that is endeavoring to rage and swallow it up. And since it became a nation again in 1948, this little nation that you might call the mystery of history has caused the world to focus its attention right there.

There's a reason for this. There's a reason that Israel is the focus of history again and that is, I believe, God is not yet finished with His purposes for them. A major part of the end of the redemptive plan of history finds its way coursing through the land of Israel. We believe that the Bible teaches that there is coming a great day for the nation Israel, a day of deliverance and a day of salvation, a day of tremendous political victory and a day of even more tremendous spiritual victory. God has planned it. God has predicted it repeatedly in the Old and the New Testament and most particularly for our interest, God details it right here in the twelfth chapter of Zechariah. It's going to be a day when what has been a very tragic history will be reversed and be a history of great joy for Israel.

Now you'll remember chapter 11 for just a moment. We looked at chapter 11 in the last several weeks and we noted that that chapter deals with the coming of Jesus Christ. And He is pictured here as a shepherd. And you remember that we saw in the first part of the chapter through verse 14 the story of Jesus' first coming. He came as the true shepherd and He was rejected. And then we saw in verses 15 to 17 that after Israel rejected the true shepherd, they would accept the false shepherd. That in the end time would come the one called the foolish shepherd who was Antichrist and Israel would accept him.

So, basically what we want to remind ourselves of in chapter 11 is that Israel refused Christ at His first coming. They refused the true shepherd and will accept the false one. Now as you move into chapter 12 we find that at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ the very opposite happens and Israel receives the true shepherd. In fact, in verse 10 it says that they shall look on Me whom they've pierced and mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son and be in bitterness for Him as one that is

in bitterness for his first born.

The first time Jesus comes in chapter 11 He's rejected. The second time Jesus comes in chapter 12 He is accepted. And those are the distinguishing elements in these two chapters.

Now let me give you another note for understanding the sweep of the book. The first eight chapters of Zechariah basically deal with Zechariah's time. They have prophetic implication but basically they deal with Zechariah's time. And then all of a sudden from chapter 9 to 14 you have this sweeping prophetic picture of the end time. So 9 to 14 is really the vast picture of the end time, the closing of redemptive history.

Now from that section, 9 to 14, there are two parts. Chapters 9 to 11 deal with the first coming of Christ, chapters 12 to 14, the Second Coming. So that will just help you dividing the book. The first part of the book is basically historic. The second part is basically futuristic. And of the futuristic part there are two sections, one dealing with the first coming of Christ--9 to 11--the second dealing with the Second coming--12 to 14. So, as we come to chapter 12 we are coming to the Second Coming of Christ, His return to earth to set up His Kingdom.

Now particularly, of course, Zechariah's point in chapters 12, 13 and 14 is to to show that when Christ returns, Israel will be converted and the Kingdom will be established...God's promised Kingdom. And that really is the subject of 12, 13 and 14. There's so much prophecy here and it is so loaded that there's no way we can really cover everything. In fact, you could spend the next five years preaching on 12 to 14 and do an entire theological study of all of the doctrines of last things and not really ever leave this section cause they're all touched on right here. Dr. Fineberg in his commentary on Zechariah says, quote: "As a portion of the prophetic Scriptures, it is second to none in importance in this book or in any other Old Testament book. It is indispensable to an understanding of the events of the last days for Israel, the time of the great Tribulation and the establishment of God's Kingdom and His rule."

The actual events which are presented here include the world confederacy against Jerusalem, the victory of God's people empowered of the Lord, the conviction of Israel nationally by the Spirit of God, the presentation of Christ as their rejected Messiah, the national day of atonement, the cleansing of the hearts of the nation, the purging of the land of idolatry and false prophets, parenthetically the crucifixion of Messiah, the time of Jacob's trouble, the partial success of the nations invading Palestine, the appearance of the Messiah for His people, their rescue, His coming with His saints, the changed and renovated holy land, the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, the punishment of the nations for their feudal assault on Israel, the celebration of the Kingdom feast, the feast of tabernacles, the complete restoration of the people of God to a holy nation, etc. Now that's a lot of prophetic theme for one little section 12 to 14. But it's all here touched on. A very very expressive and vital area of prophecy.

Now, sixteen times...I'm still giving you some notes so you'll understand the thrust of the chapter...sixteen times in these three chapters, 12, 13 and 14, is the phrase "in that day." Sixteen times it says "in that day." So we know one thing for sure, this whole section is about that day. There's no question about that. And what day? The day of the Lord. The whole picture focuses on the apocayptic day of the Lord when history resolves into the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

All right, now you've got the picture. Chapters 1 to 8 of Zechariah, basically historic; chapters 9 to 14, futuristic prophecy; chapters 9 to 11 detail the first coming of Christ; chapters 12 to 14 the Second Coming, particularly as it relates to the salvation of Israel and the establishment of the Kingdom. Now, let's look at chapter 12 now that you've got all of that completely understood.

As we look at this there are four features of Israel's coming deliverance and conversion, four features, four major events: the siege of Israel, the shielding of Israel, the sorrow of Israel and the salvation of Israel. These are dealt with in the twelfth chapter. Beloved, this is exciting material. This is not only exciting to the Jew to hear, and there certainly ought to be some of us pronouncing this and proclaiming it to Jews around the world so that they will know what God has planned for them, but it is exciting to me to know that God is in control of history. Let's look first of all at the siege of Israel in the first three verses.

"The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, who stretcheth forth the heavens and layeth the foundation of the earth and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the peoples round about when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all peoples, all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces though all the nations of the earth be gathered together against it," and we'll stop there.

Now those three verses very obviously tell us about some kind of a siege against Israel. In fact, the word "siege" is used in the Authorized in verse 2. The word simply means attack. The first element that the Holy Spirit wants us to focus on is that there will be a great attack by the Gentile nations coming against Israel. It's obvious at the end of verse 3 that all the nations of the earth will be gathered against Israel in this siege. So there is coming a day when a tremendous world war is going to happen. Some have called it the battle of the ages, the battle of the centuries, the greatest war of history, the ultimate war. Now we know it as the Gentile invasion of Israel in the Tribulation commonly called the Battle of Armageddon. This is a worldwide battle where all of the nations of the world converge on the nation Israel in an effort to wipe it out and to wipe out the potential of the Messiah's return to establish the Kingdom. It focuses on Israel. You'll notice verse 1, "The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel...for Israel..." This is all about Israel. They are the subject.

Further on you note that it mentions all through this chapter in addition to just Israel, Jerusalem in verse 2, Judah, again Jerusalem, and further down in verse 5 the governors of Judah, verse 6 the governors of Judah, the tents of Judah verse 7, Jerusalem, the house of David, Jerusalem and so forth. It's very obvious this whole prophecy is directed at Israel.

Now you'll notice there there's the term "burden." The burden of the word of the Lord. This Hebrew term is used frequently in prophetic literature. In fact it's used in chapter 9 verse 1 for a particular burden of prophecy against the Gentiles. It is used to signify, now watch it, a prophecy of grief...a prophecy of grief, something that really burdens down the prophet, something that creates anxiety and grief. And before there can ever be conversion in Israel and before there can ever be repentance in Israel and before there will ever be salvation in Israel and before God will ever set up His Kingdom, there's going to be grief...there's grief.

Now I want you to notice another thing about this thing. It is directed to Israel. It is a word of grief, to begin with, about an attack and a siege against them, but I want you to notice that it is from God. It is God Himself who brings this to pass. The burden, for example, of the word of the Lord...this is the

word of the Lord. Now, notice verse 2, "Behold, I will make..." God is in mind here, He is the I. Verse 3, "In that day I will make..." Verse 4, "In that day, I will smite and I will open Mine eyes." Verse 6, "In that day I will make..." Now repeatedly you get the idea that God is acting here. And, beloved, I want you just to remember that all of the history of the world is really the enacting of the sovereignty of God to one direct degree or another. God is involved in the flowing of history and if this attack is to come on Israel, then it is God who makes it happen. We saw the same thing similarly with the idea that there would come a false shepherd and we saw how that it literally is God who allows him to come, even the Antichrist.

Now God is making a promise here. God is directing a prophecy. It's a prophecy of siege but it's also a prophecy of salvation. And God is behind the whole thing. And the reason this is emphasized so greatly is so that the people who hear this prophecy will have the confidence to believe that it will come to pass. It doesn't depend on men. It depends upon an unchanging immutable God, a God who doesn't make plans and scuttle them, a God who isn't thwarted by some other power. When God says it and God plans to do it, it will be done. And this is why the emphasis here on God. And just in case somebody might wonder whether this God can handle it, you'll note in verse 1 that it says this, "The Lord says this..." and if you've forgotten who He is, "He's the Lord who stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundation of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him."

Now the point here is beautifully made. What he's really saying is this, it is the God who made it all who will end it all. And with the same power that God could make it begin, God will draw it to an end. He is the alpha and the omega in terms of history. This is a solid basis for faith in the ultimate destiny of history because you go back to the one who made it to start with, who created.

So you can see the divine element. Let me summarize for a minute. The divine element here then in many ways...first of all, the word "burden" is a message of grief and it always indicates a divine message attached with judgment. So this very word "burden" indicates that it comes from God, thus it is called the burden of the word of the Lord. Secondly, you'll notice that it says "saith the Lord." And again it reemphasizes that it's from God, that God is the one who is sovereign in offering this. And thirdly, as I mentioned, it describes God as the omnipotent creator of the world. He is the beginning, He will be the end. He made it in the beginning, He will make it in the end to fit His plan. It's as if it all began from Him under His control and that's the way it will all end.

So, the prophecy is toward Israel and it is from God. And first of all, the prophet says it will begin with a siege, verse 2 and 3, "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the peoples round about when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem and in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all peoples, all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces though all the nations of the earth be gathered together against it." Now, these two verses are what is simply called parallels. They both begin the same way, really, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling and verse 3 says I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone. Both 2 and 3 say unto all the peoples and for all the peoples." So here you have a description of a coming siege.

Now let's look at it for a minute. God says the siege is going to come and this is what's going to take place. First of all, I'll make Jerusalem a cup of trembling. The normal word in Hebrew is kos..k-o-s. The word here is saph, s-a-p-h, want to get that right. But the word saphmeans a basin rather than a cup, kosor kosmeans a cup, saphmeans a basin. So what you really have here is a very large basin and it needs to be very large because it's a cup of trembling for all the peoples. And if you look at the end of verse 3, all the peoples on the earth are going to have to drink out of it. So the picture here

that the prophet has in mind is this huge basin, everybody's going to drink of it.

Now you say, "Well, what is the point of this? What does he mean?" Well, there are certain cups from which if you drink you will find yourself staggering around. True? True. That's what it's saying. A cup of trembling. Not the idea that you're nervous, but the idea that you're sort of reeling around a little bit, you know, you can't walk the straight line, you fail the test. I will make...literally, if you want to know the interpretative way to render it...I will make Jerusalem a basin of intoxication to all people.

Now let me describe what he is saying. The nations are going to attack Jerusalem. Now we know this because it's detailed for us as I'll show you in a minute in many places in the Bible. There's going to be a great world war, the battle of the centuries. They're going to converge on Israel, they're going to attack Israel, they're going to attack Judah the surrounding countryside and they're going to have their sight set on Jerusalem, although they never really are able to pull off much of an attack on Jerusalem as this prophecy points out. But they really begin to go after the land of Israel. And he says they're going to be like men greedily draining a wine goblet. They're going to come in and they're just going to drink it up. But in the end, they're going to find themselves reeling and staggering around like helpless drunks, unable to claim the coveted prize and in fact they're going to be so disorganized and so drunk and so staggering around that they're going to be easy prey for divine judgment. That's the idea.

In Revelation 17:6 you remember that the final evil world system of Satan is said to be drunk with all the blood of the martyrs. Well, in a similar sense that's what's going to happen. The nations come in and they get drunk with the idea of conquest. And they think they're going to conquer Israel and they drink deeply of the goblet of victory, deeply of the goblet of war and they find that instead of them having the sanity to make the victory they have in mind, they wind up as stupefied reeling staggering drunks who are easy prey for the judgment of God.

Now he has a second metaphor that he uses to speak of them, he says, "I'll make them a burdensome stone," literally a stone of burden, a heavy stone hard to lift. Evidently, and it's interesting in the Hebrew, I did a little research on it and this very word referred to a stone that was used in weight lifting contests, a stone used in weight lifting contests. Apparently in those days they had weight lifting contests and they just got bigger and bigger and bigger stones till people got eliminated. And the guy who could lift the biggest stone ultimately was the winner.

Now the figure here is very simple. He's saying I'm going to make Jerusalem a burdensome stone, and literally what it's saying is anybody that tries to lift it is going to get a hernia. That's what it says. You say, "It does?" Trust me. See the phrase "cut in pieces?" "All that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces." Literally it says "shall grievously injure themselves." And the simple meaning in the Hebrew is to rupture, to tear's oneself, an injury perhaps sustained from lifting something too heavy.

So what's going to happen? Here come these nations to siege against Israel and instead of being able to lift Israel, the picture of conquering Israel, they're simply going to tear themselves to pieces in the effort. The proud Gentile nations who think they're going to take Jerusalem, think they're going to destroy God's people, who think they're going to remove any possibility of the Messiah having anybody left to set up His Kingdom with, all these nations of the world, it says at the end of verse 3, they're all going to be gathered there, they're all going to be in the siege, verse 2, against Judah and Jerusalem and in that day, it says in that day, verse 3, in that day, that great eschatological day of the Lord they're going to find themselves reeling around in a drunken stupor and they're going to find

themselves torn up inside because they've tried to do something that's impossible. Why? Because God is on the side of His people.

And what is absolutely incredible, people, and this is not...you know, this isn't pie in the sky or wishful thinking or something down the road that's some kind of a modified fairy tale...there is coming a day literally when the entire world attacks that little nation and that little nation wins. Now that's a staggering reality. But after all, if the same people could walk around the walls of Jericho blowing horns and have all the walls fall down, don't discount what could happen in the future. It's describing for us Armageddon.

Now it isn't the only book that describes it, go back to the third chapter of Joel. If you're wondering where it is, it's right after Hosea. If that doesn't help it's on page 930 in my Bible, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah and on. Now Joel is an interesting little book. But one of the parts that I want to point to you is the part that's about the battle of Armageddon, the battle of the ages, the war of the century that's going to happen. Verse 9 of chapter 3, Joel chapter 3 verse 9, two books right of Daniel, it says this, "Prepare this among the nations, prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up, beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears and let...that's a reverse of what happens in the Kingdom...and let the weak say I'm strong, assemble yourselves and come all you nations and gather yourselves together round about and there cause the mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the nations be weakened and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat for there I will sit to judge the nations round about. Put in the sickle for the harvest is ripe. Come get down for the press is full. The vats overflow. Their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, the stars shall withdraw their shining, the Lord shall roar out of Zion utter His voice from Jerusalem, the heavens and the earth will shake, the Lord will be the hope of His people and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall you know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain, then shall Jerusalem be holy." We'll stop there.

Coming a day of salvation. Jerusalem will be holy. Backing up, before that, there's going to be a time when Jesus Christ comes and judges the nations. Backing up from that, Joel says there's going to be a time when the nations come against Israel with a great war. It's really a war that's begun by Satan, generated by Satan, enticed by Satan, motivated by Satan, innovated by Satan, all in direct accord with the plan of God. All the nations of the world come there convening with all their armies, they're defeated by Jesus Christ, brought into the Valley of Jehoshaphat and there they are judged for their evil. And so, Joel speaks of the very same event.

Now as we look at prophecy we find interestingly enough there are four armies going to be at Armageddon. And I'll just remind you of them. The army from the west is signified in Daniel chapter 2 and Daniel chapter 7. The army from the west is in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7. And also in Revelation 17 it talks about this. And this is what we know as the European Confederacy, this is what Daniel would call the revived Roman Empire. Those nations that once made up a part of the Roman Empire regrouped, reunited ten nations making up one confederacy. Excuse me...by the way, we're not far from that right now in the European economic community. Those nations constitute the army of the west led by the Antichrist, the emperor of that particular dominion. They mark against Israel.

Then there is the army of the north. And Ezekiel 38, you read Ezekiel 38 and 39 and you'll find the army from the north. And we know it is Russia and her allies, Gog and Magog, the land of Meshech and Tubal and they ally with Cush and Put and so forth, those other names which are ancient names

of modern Arab states. So there is some kind of a Russian-Arab alliance.

And then there is in Daniel 11 the southern army coming up from the south. And this is Egypt...Daniel 11:40 to 44 talks about it. The army of the south will be Egypt and other Arab allies. So you've got the west, the north, the south, and then of course you're well aware that in Revelation 9 and in Revelation 16 there's a great army of the east with 200 million soldiers that comes moving toward Israel. The Euphrates River is dried up and they march toward Israel. So you've got the west, the north, the south and the east converging. And when they all arrive, folks, there's going to be some kind of battle. Just imagine the army of the east alone has 200 million soldiers. That's really amazing and would be shocking except for the fact that the army in Red China right now numbers 200 million soldiers as it did seven years ago.

In Revelation 14 verse 20 it says, "And the winepress was trodden outside the city," apparently they don't really get into the city of Jerusalem, they begin to tear up the countryside all around, "and blood came out of the winepress even to the horses' bridles by the space of a thousand six hundred furlongs." Literally what it says is there was blood as deep as horses' bridles for a two hundred mile area. Now that may not be specifically literal, it may be somewhat figurative, but the point is there is going to be unprecedented bloodshed all over the face of that land. It's only 200 miles long, so what it means is the whole land is going to be in the midst of a drowning blood bath as the battle rages...the war of the world, the battle of the centuries.

In the midst of it all, the world is going to find out that all they get out of it is a drunken stupor and they're unable to claim their prize. And all they get out of it is a sort of a political spiritual rupture in trying to lift the stone that's far too heavy because God happens to be sitting on it. Hope for that day is, I think, expressed in one of the Psalms. In Psalm 118 verse 6, "The Lord is on my side, I will not fear, what can man do unto me? The Lord takes my part with those who help me. Therefore shall I see my desire upon those who hate me." Verse 10, "All nations compassed me about but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them. They compassed me about, yea, they compassed me about but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. They compassed me about like bees, they are quenched like the fire of thorns for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them." That's a Psalm that sings of the victory that God brings over the armies of Armageddon. So, the siege of Israel...

Secondly, moving from the siege in the text to verse 4 we come to the shielding of Israel. And here we look at God and how God is going to protect those people. Verse 4, "In that day," and again we're in that day, day of the day of the Lord which is the day of judgment and the return of Christ, "In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with terror and his rider with madness, I will open Mine eyes upon the house of Judah and will smite every horse of the peoples with blindness and the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength and the Lord of host their God. 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; they shall devour all the peoples round about on the right hand and on the left and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem."

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

"The Lord shall also save the tents of Judah first and that the glory of the house of David and the

glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be like David and the house of David shall be like God like the angel of the Lord before them. And it shall come to pass in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." Now we'll stop there. That section deals with the shielding of Israel. God is going to come in protection and bring a tremendous victory.

Let's go back now to verse 4 for a minute. "In that day, saith the Lord," and this is most interesting, horses were the symbol of strength, they were the symbol of power. They were a symbol of a formidable army. And in that day, He says, I will smite every horse with terror. Now this probably means confusion. In other words, the horses are just going to go off in all kinds of directions. And down in verse 4 at the bottom it says He'll smite every horse of the people with blindness. Now if you believe that the battle of Armageddon will have literal horses, then the literal horses will be smitten with blindness and confusion. If you believe this is talking about military tanks and weaponry and so forth then that will all fall into confusion and they won't know where they're going. Whichever.

But he also adds, "And the riders with madness." This simply means panic, a wild and helpless kind of panic in the Hebrew. So here come all these great armies of the world and all of a sudden all of their weaponry and all of their instruments and all of their vehicles and all of the people who running the thing go into total confusion, blindness and panic. By the way, interesting note, in studying this I discovered that these things described in verse 4 are the very calamities that befell Israel in Deuteronomy 28:28. The very thing that happened to Israel in her unbelief is going to come to happen to those Gentile nations at Armageddon. So terror, confusion, seize the ranks of the worlds' armies.

That's nothing new. Really, you remember some armies in the Old Testament that got so confused they started killing each other? Yeah, you remember Gideon? Stands on a hill and bangs a bunch of pots and watched them all slay each other. Terror and confusion seizes the ranks of the worlds' armies. And while they have imagined that they have gained the victory, they find out that all they are rather than chasing the vanquished Jews is rushing themselves to destruction. And the key phrase here in verse 4 is God says, "I will open My eyes on the house of Judah." No longer will I turn My back, no longer will I keep My eyes closed to what's going on, I'm going to open My eyes. And these are eyes of love and these are eyes of care and these are eyes of tenderness and these are eyes of forgiveness, these are eyes of salvation. God says I'm going to open My eyes toward Israel.

Now look at verse 5, God shields them, "And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart..." Now we're looking at the countryside around the city of Jerusalem. The people who would be the most vulnerable in a war, they wouldn't have any defense, Jerusalem is somewhat defensible. They wouldn't have any defense. Just the people living all over the land and the governors, the leaders out in the countryside are going to say in their heart, "The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of host their God."

What is it saying? Listen, it's saying this, the fact that God has chosen Jerusalem to be His city, the city of His affection and the city of His election, the city He will save gives confidence to us in the surrounding countryside. In other words, we're getting in on the fact that Jerusalem is God's city. And all of us who live anywhere in this land are preserved because God has chosen Jerusalem. That's what they're saying. The governors of Judah outside and around are saying it is because of what God has promised to do for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that becomes our strength. God has

chosen Jerusalem and because He has chosen Jerusalem and the nation around, the princes of Judah are confident that they too are invincible. Perhaps they'll sing Psalm 46:5 which says, "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved." And that's about Jerusalem.

Now I want you to notice something interesting. This is a critical verse because it opens the door just a crack and the light starts to come in. What light? The light of the beginning of saving faith. All of a sudden all through Israel's history today they've been thinking their strength is in themselves, in their guns, and their smarts, and their military expertise. And they're going to come to the place where they all of a sudden say in their hearts, "The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength, not in their power or in their military prowess or because they've got so many smart people, but in the Lord of host their God." All of a sudden they turn from the politics of it and the armies and they begin to see God as the resource. They don't see that yet. But when they begin to see God shield them in the midst of Armageddon, they're going to see that God is their strength. They're going to realize there is no way militarily that they could handle what they're handling. They might be able to win a skirmish with the PLO, they might be able to stop the encroachment from Jordan and they might be able to handle the Egyptians, but when the world arrives and all of a sudden they see themselves gaining the victory, they're going to know that the strength that they have seen is not the strength of men. And here is the first glimpse of the saving faith that comes to the hearts of Israel.

Verse 6, "In that day will I make the governors of Judah," and He's still dealing outside the city, it never really touches the city, "I'll make the governors of Judah in the countryside around like a fire pot among the wood." Now I don't know if you know what a fire pot is. Those of us who live in the day of thermostats and forced air, a fire pot was just that, a bunch of coals in a little metal pot that you put in some kindling wood and it started a fire. You drop a fire pot on a pile of kindling, you're going to get a quick fire. And that's what He's saying. The Gentile armies are kindling. The governors of Judah are fire pots. Those simple little people in their simple little military weakness are going to fire and burn the armies of the nations. He says it will also be like a torch of fire in a dry sheaf. Take a sheaf of grain that's dry and set a torch to it, pshew....drop a fire pot in some dry sticks, you get the same thing. So just as a fire pot sets fire to twigs and dry wood and a torch sets fire to dry grain, so Judah's princes will devour. And who will they devour? Look what it says? "All the nations round about on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem will be inhabited again in her own place even in Jerusalem."

In other words, in the end time nothing will have happened to that city. It won't be moved. It will never be destroyed. It's going to be there right where it belongs. You know what's incredible about that? That city hasn't moved. You know, as you study archaeology, you find a lot of cities move from place to place. You can go right to Jerusalem, right in the middle of Jerusalem, walk right out, put your hand out in that mosque and lay it right on Mount Moriah, it's still there. And you can take about a ten-minute walk and stand with your feet on Mount Zion. It's right there. Nothing moved. And God says it won't move either. They're not even going to get there with any really powerful effect because when they just get into the countryside, God is going to use the governors of Judah to set them aflame. And so there's going to be the protection of God and Jerusalem will be inhabited in her own place even in Jerusalem. Literally it says Jerusalem shall sit undisturbed, secure, shielded by God.

Then a very interesting note in verse 7. This is very interesting. "The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first in order that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah." In other words, if Jerusalem won this big victory to start with, if all the military geniuses and all the hotshots in Jerusalem won, they'd say, "Well, it was us."

And so just to make sure they don't mistake it being human and know it's God, the great victory comes first to all the little folks out in the countryside who win the war, who knock off the big Gentile armies. And then Jerusalem's got nothing to boast about because by the time it comes to them, all they can say is it's got to be God, it sure isn't us, it wasn't them.

In other words, to prevent Jerusalem from magnifying itself against the country folks, God makes sure the country folks gain the first deliverance. Why? This is a time of humbling for the nations. This is a time of penitence. This is a time of repentance. This is a time of bending the back and bowing the knee and laying prostrate before God. God wants no human glory, no human magnification and so just to make sure it won't happen He starts by giving the victory first to the little folks in the countryside. The defenseless land is delivered first. The well defended capital last in order that Jerusalem not think it was by her military might and be lifted up with pride. So God defends the defenseless and then Jerusalem.

Verse 8, "In that day shall the Lord defend or shield the inhabitants of Jerusalem," and I love this, this is so great, "he that is feeble among them at that day shall be like David." Isn't that amazing? Who was the greatest soldier in the history of Israel? David. Saul has slain his thousands, David his ten thousands. Greatest soldier in the history of Israel. One little rock...pshew...one dead Goliath. Greatest soldier in the history of Israel. And the weak and the puny in this day will all be like David.

What an army. Can you imagine? And by the way, the strong represented by the house of David, those who are in the house of David, the royal line, the great warriors, the strong shall be like God. They'll be like the angel of the Lord. Who is the angel of the Lord? Christ. They'll be infused with the power of Christ. Oh, I tell you, that's going to be exciting, isn't it? You say, "Will we get to see that?" I think so. If I read my Bible right we're coming out of heaven just about that time on white horses which will give us a perfect view of the whole thing. So the feeble are going to be like David and the people who normally are like David are going to be like God, infused with the energy of the Messiah Himself, the angel of the Lord. That's just a little taste, that's a little hint of the fact that Jesus Christ is going to be there winning the victory.

And what's so beautiful, if you study the book of Revelation, you find out that just at the climax of Armageddon, just when the war reaches its high point, out of the sky comes Jesus Christ. And maybe you've asked yourself, "Well how does He win it? Well how does He do it?" Well somehow it's His conquering blow, it's His sword but somehow it's His power poured through these people who shall be like God like the angel of the Lord. It's most interesting, isn't it, that the angel of the Lord is equated with God...another evidence that the angel of the Lord was not just an angel but God, God incarnate Jesus Christ.

"And it shall come to pass," verse 9 says, "in that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." God is going to wipe out all those who sought to wipe out His people and His Kingdom.

The term "will seek" is a most interesting Hebrew term. It is a term that is used of a marksman who bends his bow with his eye focused on the target. He wants to hit the bullseye and nothing distracts him. The cup of iniquity is full and God comes in judgment. Read Revelation 16, read Revelation 19 and see how God begins to come in judgment, how Jesus splits the heavens with His coming, comes in glory and power with a flaming victory at hand with a sword dipped in blood and He comes to conquer.

So, in summary, first nine verses of the twelfth chapter describe prophetically Israel's great deliverance and the destruction of the armies of the world gathered against her. That's political, folks. That's political. The next part is spiritual. And that brings us to the sorrow of Israel...the sorrow of Israel.

In the political victory, what's the one thing that stands out in your mind? In my mind it's this. They are going to recognize whom? God. They're going to see God at work. That's the beginning. That's an easy transition to verse 10. "And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication and they shall look on Me whom they have pierced."

While their spiritual eyes are up and they're thinking about God and how He has delivered them, they're going to see God incarnate, Jesus, coming. They're going to look on Him. The Savior will be revealed as the victor. And they have a simple response, "They shall mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son and shall be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for His first born. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem as in the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; and the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; and the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives, all the families that remain, every family apart and their wives apart."

What's He saying? He's saying there will be not just a national mourning like "This is declared the national day of mourning." No. There will be national mourning in this sense, every family on its own. And within that family, every individual, the men here, the wives here...there will be individual mourning, individual repentance, family repentance and then all those families making up the whole of national repentance. This is right at the point of victory.

You say, "It's strange, isn't it?" Oh yeah. Here they are, they've just won the battle of the centuries. Here they are, the greatest victory conceivable has just been won and their reaction is to all cry...all nations sobbing, crying, mourning. Why? Because they recognize that the very one who came back as their deliverer, was the same one they killed and they pierced when He came the first time. That's why they mourn. And now that's the anguish of true repentance, beloved.

There's really only one sin...now watch this one...there's really only one sin that God wants you to repent of in the act of salvation, just one...there's really just one sin the Holy Spirit moves after, and all the rest kind of follow along. Listen to this, when the comforter is come, He will reprove the world of sin, John 16:8, now listen to verse 9, of sin. And what is it? Because they believe not on Me, that's the sin. That's it. That's the one sin the Spirit of God must convict to bring a person to salvation. And that's exactly the one Israel will be convicted of. They'll look on Me, says God, whom they have pierced and mourn as if they were mourning the death of their only son. Sorrow for the sin of rejecting Christ. Beloved, that's where salvation begins, that's where it begins in your heart. Anybody to be saved must turn from the ultimate sin which is the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ...not believing in Him.

Now notice what he says about it. He says this mourning and this bitterness is similar to that which was in the valley of Hadadrimmon, the valley of Megiddon. You say, "What's that?" I'm not going to have you turn to it but just note it, 2 Chronicles 35 records for us a sad story. There was a godly king

in Israel, king in Judah, actually, never was a godly king in Israel, they were all bad...but in Judah there was a godly king and his name was Josiah. You remember good godly King Josiah? And there was a bad, bad ruler in Egypt known as Pharaoh Necho, N-e-c-h-o. Pharaoh Necho murdered Josiah and 2 Chronicles 35 records the terrible, terrible weeping and wailing and mourning that occurred over the murder of Josiah. And so says Zechariah, the mourning in that day in Jerusalem will be reminiscent of the mourning of the people over the death of the good godly King Josiah at the hands of Pharaoh.

Now you'll notice also in verse 12 that it singles out the family of David and then the family of Nathan. Why? Well, the family of David is the royal line, the regal line, the line of Solomon, the line through which Joseph the husband of Mary descended. So the royal family is going to mourn. It's talking about all classes of people. The royalty, he starts with. Then the family of Nathan. "Nathan?" you say, "who is Nathan?" Listen to this, Nathan is the brother of Solomon through whom Mary was descended. Check it out, Luke 2. So all of those people who fit anywhere into the royal line, anywhere into the Messianic line are going to weep. Naturally, don't you think they'll be the first ones to weep? Sure they will, because they'll know that it was in their very line that the Messiah came and was rejected.

Then the family of Levi and the family of Shimei. You know who they were? They were priestly families. Don't you think the priesthood will weep? Don't you think the priesthood will mourn? All those years they were supposed to connect men to God, all those years they were supposed to speak to men for God, all those years they were supposed to speak to God for men, all those years they stood in the place of God and when God finally arrived, they slew Him...don't you think they'll mourn? These...these families, the family of David and Nathan and Levi and Shimei, David Barron(?) says "These are the aristocratic and privileged lines, these are the kings and the priests who alas in times passed often set an evil example to the whole nation where they 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."

And so, in verse 14 it says all the families that remain...every family apart, individually, each family repenting and their wives, even the individuals in the family repenting. Great sorrow.

This is beautiful. You know what I thought of when I was looking at this? I just kept thinking of one statement by Jesus, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall...what?...be comforted." This is the mourning of true repentance. It's coming. And they'll be comforted. The Hebrew word "mourn" means to strike the breast in deep grief...bitter sorrow...true repentance.

So, the siege, the shielding and the sorrow culminates into salvation of Israel. Verse 10 at the beginning, just a simple word of salvation, "And I will pour upon the house of David," God never sprinkles, He always pours...I want you to know that. "I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit." You see, there's the evidence of salvation. God never gives His Spirit to an unbeliever. He pours the Spirit..and He's called the Spirit of grace, because that's the motive for which He's given...and the Spirit of supplication, that's the response which He brings. When God pours out His Spirit by grace, we respond in prayer. Zechariah is saying that just as God pours out refreshing showers on thirsty and parched ground, so will He pour out the Spirit of grace and supplication on a repentant needy Israel.

The Spirit of grace...what a great term. Isn't that a beautiful term? It's used in Hebrews 10:29, the

Spirit of grace. Joel prophesied this, didn't he? Joel chapter 2, oh yes. Joel said the same thing essentially. He said, "It shall come to pass afterward I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh, your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men dream dreams, your young men see visions. And also on the servants and the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit."

Beloved, that prophesy can only be fulfilled here. On the day of Pentecost when Peter quoted it, they were just getting a little taste of it. But it's a future prophecy. Ezekiel said the same thing. In Ezekiel 36, Ezekiel said, "Some day God is going to come and He is going to...He is going to come to Israel and He's going to take out their stony heart and He's going to give them a heart of flesh," and he says, "I will give them My Spirit." Salvation.

And I can't resist pointing you to the fact that it only happens...now watch it...it only happens because, "They look on Me whom they have pierced." Who's talking here in this verse? God...God is talking. Do you know who it was on that cross? Who was it? God. Is that a great statement? Then notice, "They will look on Me whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for Him." You see the trinity there? In one breath it's Me, in another breath it's Him. And there God sees Himself there in one breath and in the next breath He sees the incarnate Christ the Son.

Don't anybody tell you that that wasn't God, that Jesus is any less than God. God says that was Me you pierced. And don't let anybody tell you that the Jews didn't pierce Him. They may have used Roman swords, but it was their plotting that got Him there. That's all right. That's all right for God because God can forgive anything...anything, even the murder of the Messiah. And by the way, there isn't anything you've done that He couldn't forgive either. "They shall look on Me whom they pierced." Remember John 19:37, they took a sword and they pierced Him.

And then Israel is going to receive salvation, look at 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." God's going to wash the nation from its sin.

First, they're going to cry "My Lord and my God," when they see Jesus. They're going to realize it was God they pierced. And then God's going to turn the fountain loose and wash them and pour out His Spirit.

In any day in any age, repentance like this kind, true honest repentance will lead to the same cleansing. Beloved, can I tell you something? The fountain's open right now, did you know that? I've been there, have you? And I've been washed. It's open right now. Paul says today is the day of salvation. And while we as Christians look forward expectantly to the day of national mourning and blessing for Israel, meanwhile we can tell every Jew and every Gentile that they don't need to wait till then, the fountain's open right now. It's open for you right now. Let's pray.

Father, we're so grateful for this tremendous hope. What a God of grace. Oh what we see when we look at the future and see the plan You have. And just to realize we're a part of it is such joy. Thank You. Thank You for having that fountain open, that fountain--as the song writer said--filled with blood, flowing from Emanuel's veins in which every sinner's stain is washed. Thank You, Father, for the fountain that will be open to Israel in that day and for the fountain that's open right now for any Jew or Gentile who comes and is ready to repent of the sin of unbelief and turn to Jesus Christ.

Father, if there's any in our midst tonight who have never been to the font, who have never been washed in the blood of the lamb, who've never been cleansed, forgiven, granted eternal life, been given the Spirit of grace, and citizenship in the Kingdom, we pray that tonight might be that night when they receive this gift that You freely offer. To this end we pray for them and for us who know You that we might be faithful to spread the word that You're waiting and that You said, "Him that comes to Me I will in now wise cast out." May we be faithful to bring folks to the cleansing that waits for them even now. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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