

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **The Cleansing of Israel**

Scripture: Zechariah 13:1-9

Code: 2170

We find ourselves in the thirteenth chapter of Zechariah tonight in our Bible study. We're going to be going through this brief chapter, it's only nine verses, and seeing just exactly what God has to say about the cleansing of Israel...the cleansing of Israel.

God has in mind a wonderful day coming for Israel. Zechariah calls it the cleansing of Israel. In chapter 13 and verse 1 he says, "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." Zechariah predicts a day when Israel is going to be cleansed of sin and uncleanness. This is God's plan for His people Israel.

Now I want to back up from that future day to the past a little bit and I'd like to have you look with me to the fifth chapter of Isaiah...Isaiah chapter 5, the great prophecy of the man of God, Isaiah. And in chapter 5 verse 1 we see a very interesting prophecy that will relate, as we shall see, to what we want to say tonight...Zechariah (should be Isaiah) chapter 5 verse 1. Now here the Lord is referring to the people Israel under the terminology of a vineyard. Verse 1, "Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard." My well beloved--who is God--has a vineyard--who is Israel--in a very fertile hill which obviously--or fruitful hill--which obviously would have reference to Canaan. God is the well beloved who has a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.

"And He dug it and He gathered out the stones and He planted it with the choicest vine and He built a tower in the midst of it and also made a winepress in it and He looked for it to bring forth grapes and it brought forth wild grapes." God had a design for His people. He made the place for them. He cleaned it out. He prepared it. He planted them...the object of His love. And He waited for them to produce the grapes that He desired. And instead they were wild grapes, foreign to His plan, foreign--as it were--to the seeds He planted.

Verse 3 says, "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between Me and My vineyard." When the vineyard brought forth wild grapes, the vineyard became the object of judgment. And God is about to move on His own vineyard. "What could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I looked for it to bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes. And now I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard, I will take away its hedge--that is its protection--it shall be eaten up. I'll break down its wall and it shall be trampled down and I will lay it waste, it shall not be pruned nor digged but there shall come up briars and thorns, I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it for the vineyard of the Lord of host is the house of

Israel and the men of Judah His pleasant plant and He looked for justice but behold oppression, He looked for righteousness but behold a cry."

Now God says I made a vineyard and I planted it and I expected it to respond to that in a way that it was reasonable to respond and instead it rebelled and it brought forth wild grapes and thus I will judge it. I will tear down its hedge and its wall and its protection is gone. I will lay it waste. It will neither be pruned nor digged, it won't be cared for...briars and thorns will come up. The clouds will no longer rain upon it. God is here speaking of judgment upon Israel. And the reason God is judging Israel is because of Israel's unbelief and Israel's rebellion.

Now the same sad story is reiterated in different terms in Matthew chapter 21...Matthew chapter 21 and verse 33. You may remember this story, Matthew 21:33. Jesus said, here another parable, "There was a certain householder, certain owner, who planted a vineyard and hedged it round about and dug a winepress in it and built a tower," and so far it sounds exactly like Isaiah 5. And here it varies a little, "Lease it to tenant farmers and went into a far country. And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the farmers that they might receive the fruits of it." He lent it out to farmers.

Now watch. The one who owns the vineyard, the householder, is God. The vineyard, in effect, is His law, His standards, His principles, His truth, His way of life, His commandments. They were given to farmers while God went away. The farmers, the nation Israel, most particularly the chief priests and the leaders. And then when the time of the fruit drew near, He sent His servants to the farmers. The servants are the prophets...that they might receive the fruits. And the farmers took His servants and beat one and killed another and stoned another. Israel killed the prophets. Jesus even said about Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that stoneth the prophets and killest them that are sent unto you." This is what they did.

And He sent other servants, verse 36, more than the first and they did the same to them. But last of all He sent them His Son, saying, "They will reverence My Son." You see the picture now? Finally God said I'll send My Son. They certainly will respond differently to Him than they did to the prophets. But when the farmers, the chief priests, the leaders of Israel saw the Son, they said among themselves, "This is the heir, come let us kill Him and let us seize on His inheritance. They caught Him and cast Him out of the vineyard and slew Him. When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will He do unto those farmers?" Hmph, what do you think the people responded who were listening to the parable? "Why they said unto Him, He'll miserably destroy those wicked men." What a terrible story You've just told us, Jesus. "And He'll lease His vineyard to other farmers who will render Him the fruits in their seasons."

"Jesus said to them, Did you ever read in the Scripture, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it." Guess who those farmers are, folks? It's you. And the kingdom will be taken from you and given to others. And that's the Gentiles and that's the church. And in verse 45, well verse 44 is the judgment, "And whosoever shall fall on the stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees heard this parable, they perceived that He spoke of them, but when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitude because they regarded Him as a prophet." They would have even fulfilled the parable by killing Him right there. But they feared the crowd.

God planted a vineyard. God sent to that vineyard servants to gain the fruit of the vineyard. The farmers killed the servants, ultimately they killed the Son. And so, God took away from them His Kingdom and gave it to those who would bring forth its fruit. And that's the church.

You say, "Well, in Isaiah chapter 5, God really was upset with His vineyard and He just said that's it. And He laid it waste." That's right. And in a completely different parable approaching the situation from a different angle, though it deals also with a vineyard, God was very upset with Israel in Jesus time too and He said I'm going to take away your rights and I'm going to grant them to another people.

Doesn't this indicate to us that God is really finished? That God as far as Israel is concerned as a vineyard is done with them? Look at Romans chapter 11. In Romans chapter 11, he is saying the church is like a grafted-in branch in a wild olive tree...from a wild olive tree. But in verse 24 he says to the Gentile church, "For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature and grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree," in other words, the church was literally grafted in to the place of blessing, the covenant place, place of salvation, "how much more shall these who are the natural branches," and who would that be? Israel..."Be grafted into their own olive tree?"

The time is coming when God's going to put that natural branch right back in. God's going to replant that vineyard. God's going to restore that vineyard. And verse 26 says, "So all Israel shall be saved."

So God isn't through with His vineyard, if you will. God isn't through with His olive grove. God is not through with Israel. God is a God of forgiveness. And that's what I want you to get. Even though Isaiah was so firm about God's attitude and even though Jesus was so firm about it, God is a God of forgiveness and God is going to forgive Israel and God is going to cleanse Israel and God is going to restore Israel to the place of blessing.

One of the great preachers in American history was a man by the name of Henry Ward Beecher. Henry Ward Beecher characterized God's forgiveness with these words, let me read them to you: "Let me go and saw off a branch from one of the trees that is now budding in my garden and all summer long there will be an ugly scar where the gash has been made. But by next Autumn it will be perfectly

covered over by the growth. And by the following Autumn it will be hidden out of sight. And in four or five years, there will be but a slight scar to show where it has been. And in ten or twenty years, you would never suspect that there had been an amputation at all. Now trees know how to overgrow their injuries and hide them. And love does not wait so long as trees do. It knows how to throw out all divine and beneficent juices as it were and hide from sight the wrongs done. And God says He forgives in the same way. He will never again make mention as He declares in Ezekiel to His people of their sins, He will never taunt them with them," end quote.

God in the wonderful love and grace that He sheds on Israel will overgrow the scars. And when God restores Israel, it will be as if God never ever broke the branch off, as if God never laid waste to the vineyard.

No wonder the prophet Micah in the seventh chapter and the eighteenth verse said this, "Who is a God like unto Thee who pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage. He retaineth not His anger forever because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again. He will have compassion on us. He will subdue our iniquities and Thou will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." No wonder Micah said "Who is a pardoning God like unto Thee?" All that Israel did in the past to the prophets as Isaiah stated it, all that they did to God's laws and commandments, all that they did in the life of Jesus Christ, to the very Son, is going to be forgiven because God is a God of forgiveness, a God who wipes out scars. That's the nature of God's grace.

You know, the whole Old Testament talks about God's forgiveness again and again...the whole sacrificial system is predicated on a forgiving God. In Psalm, I think it's 103:12, I could be wrong, let me see...yes, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us...I love this...as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him, for He knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust." And you can't expect a whole lot out of dust. You've got to give a little. So God is a God of forgiveness.

In Jeremiah, the wonderful chapter of the new covenant is 31, and in Jeremiah 31:34 it says, "And know the Lord, for they shall all know Me from the least of them to the greatest, saith the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity...then this great statement...and I will remember their sin no more." God forgets, He removes it as far as the east is from the west.

In Acts chapter 3 verse 19, Peter says, "Repent therefore...and I love this...and be converted that your sins may be...what?...blotted out." Blotted out...totally removed. So God is a God of forgiveness. God forgets. He blots out. He throws in the depth of the sea, He removes as far as the east is from the west.

And it doesn't really matter what Israel has done in the past. It doesn't really matter even what they did in the time of Jesus Christ ultimately...I say it doesn't matter, I don't mean that in a total sense, I

mean it doesn't effect His nature. It lays nothing to bear on His nature that would change Him. And no matter what they have done, He is still a God of forgiveness and He will come to them in forgiveness. And that is the message of Zechariah chapter 13. God is a God of forgiveness. And that forgiveness is promised in the thirteenth chapter, that cleansing is promised to Israel.

Now remember the setting. In chapter 12 we learned that in the future time in a period called "that day" which is the day of the Lord and we told you that's the time of the great Tribulation, that during the great Tribulation, the nation Israel, the remnant that remains after all of the slaughter of the Tribulation is going to repent and turn to Christ. Verse 10 of chapter 12, it says, "And they shall...in the middle of the verse...they shall look on Me whom they have pierced and mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son." Now here you have them seeing Christ, repenting of their sin, weeping in sorrow and that's the foundation upon which the cleansing of chapter 13 occurs. You see the sorrow, don't you, in verse 11, a great mourning, verse 12, a great mourning, verse 13, mourning, verse 14 mourning, all this weeping and mourning and repentance when they see Jesus Christ and it is this that is the foundation for the cleansing that comes in 13.

And that's a simple point, folks, you ought to make sure you understand. There is no forgiveness until there is repentance. There is no salvation until there is sorrow for sin. There is no cleansing until there is an awareness that cleansing is needed. And as they mourn and as they see Christ, they are doing what is required by God for cleansing.

So, we saw in the first nine verses of chapter 12 the tremendous holocaust of Armageddon. And born out of that slaughter of Armageddon is going to be the vision of the returning Christ as He comes in His glory. And the remnant that is left at the end of the slaughter is going to see Jesus Christ and they're going to mourn and they're going to weep and they're going to repent and then you come into 13 and immediately it says "For them will be opened a fountain to cleanse them." Because cleansing always follows true repentance, true sorrow for sin. And so that's what happens in 13.

And then you say, "What happens in chapter 14?" Well, that's when you get to the Kingdom because the repentant and cleansed people are ready to occupy the Kingdom...the millennial Kingdom. So that's the connection between these chapters. There's coming then as we look at chapter 13, a future cleansing for Israel.

Now Zechariah is not the only prophet to speak of this. Ezekiel does in chapter 36 and I would just remind you of the words, listen as I read them to you, Ezekiel 36:25 says, "Then will I sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Now here's the same time period, in the future, in that day, the day of repentance, the day when the remnant really turns to Christ. There's coming a cleansing. Verse 26, he follows by saying, "A new heart also will I give you, a new Spirit will I put within you, I will take away the stoney heart out of your flesh and I'll give you an heart of flesh, I'll put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My

statutes and you shall keep My ordinances and do them." Verse 29, "I will save you from all your uncleanness." So basically Ezekiel is saying the very same thing. There's coming a tremendous cleansing when God purges His people in response to their repentance.

Now as we come to the thirteenth chapter, Zechariah by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit outlines for us the elements of this cleansing. There are six. But Israel is going to be cleansed and there are six elements to this cleansing. There are six elements. And we'll see them as we go. Let's just begin with the first one. First of all, Israel will be cleansed from the defilement of sin...from the defilement of sin. Verse 1, "In that day..." "In that day" means the day of the Lord and it also means the day when Israel repents. "There will be a fountain opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." Now those two terms are used to show the totality of this cleansing. The house of David speaks of the royalty and the inhabitants of Jerusalem speak of the laity, as it were, so common person and royal person alike will enter into this cleansing. And this fountain will be opened to them for sin and for uncleanness.

In other words, this cleansing will be a cleansing from the defilement of sin. Frankly, this is the supreme need of the Jew and I would add it is the supreme need of the Gentile...to be cleansed from defilement. The Bible says that every man is a sinner..that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. That no one escapes, there is none righteous, no, not one, said the Apostle Paul. We are sinners and cleansing and regeneration is needed. Particularly in relation to Israel, Zechariah is speaking here. Israel has been defiled for many reasons. Number one, because of historic disobedience to the law of God. Number two, because of an outright wholesale rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. These things have brought about the defilement of the people of Israel. And they are guilty and they are kept from salvation by these rejections and by continual hardness of heart and continual unbelief.

In Romans 10:3 the Apostle Paul says, "For they being ignorant of the righteousness of God go about to establish their own righteousness." They are self-righteous, they are trying to establish their own righteousness, Paul says, and have not submitted to the righteousness of God. They have authored a system of works rather than the system of faith and grace that God authored. And in this state of rejection, unbelief, hardness of heart, Israel is guilty before God of sin. And, of course, the greatest sin of all is to reject Christ, and they have done that. And now today you see the nation of Israel, the religious Jew, if you will, divided into three categories. You have the orthodox who are very few in number, very few, who still adhere in any sense to the Old Testament text but violently are opposed to Jesus Christ. They stand in a place of unbelief and sin.

Then you have the next group which are known as conservative. They are the moderately liberal Jews who don't accept the literalness of the Old Testament but believe it has some spiritualized significance. They, too, reject Jesus Christ and, in fact, they reject the commands of God, spiritualizing them away.

And then you have the most liberal of all called the "reformed" who don't really believe that the Bible is anything more than sort of a human document in any sense. And they are basically a social club. And all these categories of Israelites stand in the place of sin because the sin is rejecting Jesus Christ and the law and the principles of God's truth.

But what happens in that day is wonderful. Look at it. In that day a fountain, maqowrin Hebrew. It means, it comes from a root verb which means to dig out. It could be a well, or a spring or a fountain. And that's just what it means, a gushing fountain.

Jeremiah 2:13 and Jeremiah 17:13 use the very same Hebrew word and they talk about the fountain of living waters gushing out, that's the idea. Psalm 36:9 uses it and says, "For with Thee is the fountain of life." It speaks of something just gushing out of a source. Now here it is not used as the source of life or the source of refreshment as in those other texts, but as a means of cleansing and purification. If you remember chapter 3, we saw in chapter 3 one of Zechariah's visions was of this priest by the name of Joshua and in verse 4...well, verse 3 it says, "Joshua was clothed with filthy garments," and then this angel came and said, "Take away the filthy garments." Why? He said to him, "Because I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee." And here was a picture of the priestly nation Israel sort of this priest Joshua was kind of like a symbol of the priestly nation Israel and Zechariah saw in this vision that night when he had all those eight visions, he saw Zechariah...he saw rather Joshua with filthy garments and the angel came and said, "Take away those filthy garments because I'm going to cleanse you." And that was a picture of Israel. And that's the same thing you have here. God is going to cleanse Israel of all its filthiness.

Now notice the word "opened" there. The word opened in the Hebrew has with it the idea of continuance...continuous, permanent opening. This thing, once it's opened, will be perennial. And it will be available as a source of perennial purification. Beloved, whenever God opens the fountain of cleansing, it's perennial. Now frankly, the fountain of cleansing was opened at Calvary, is that right? On the cross of Calvary the fountain was opened. And it's been purifying souls ever since. And yet Israel has never been able to enter the purification because of their unbelief and hardness of heart. But the fountain has been opened for a long time to the whole world, but it won't be opened, as he says here, to Israel with a perennial cleansing until Israel comes in repentance.

But I want to speak to you on this idea of the opening being a perennial thing. Once the fountain was opened at Calvary, John says this, "And the blood...1 John 1:9...and the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, keeps on...what?...cleansing us." It's perennial.

I was talking to the Rams football team the other night and I talked to them about the concept of forgiveness in the Bible. And I said the Christian cannot stack up one sin in a row that is unforgiven because the blood of Jesus Christ keeps on cleansing us. The fountain was opened at Calvary and

the flow is perennial. As long as there is sin, there's cleansing for the one who believes. And someday that perennial fountain will be open for Israel for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And when they come in repentance and that fountain opens on a national basis to them, notice the end of verse 1, it will be for sin and uncleanness. The word "sin" is significant, it means in the Hebrew to miss the mark, chattath to miss the mark, to go in the wrong way. It was used in reference to sin against men and sin against God, a very common Old Testament word. But its root idea is you went wrong, you went the wrong way down the wrong path, the path of disobedience, the path of indifference, the path of rebellion. It has to do then with what a person does, going away from God, behaving in a manner inconsistent with God's pattern.

The second word, "uncleanness," is a word that means something that is to be shunned, or something you are to flee from. The word is used, for example, with any kind of ceremonial impurity in the book of Leviticus. In fact, Leviticus is the only other place in the Old Testament where the word is used. And it has to do with those things that would ceremonially defile somebody like a dead body. So it has to do with defilement, something to be shunned, something that would bring defilement.

And so, the point is this, Israel will be cleansed of its own moral defilement and of its tendency to behave and go in the wrong direction. So this is twofold. Israel's cleansing will have to do with what it is and what it does, you see. Because that's how sin manifests itself. It is a matter of what we are and consequently it is a matter of what we do. And so this will come as a cleansing from the defilement of sin.

And this is the thing that everybody needs. I thank God that there are some who have already entered into the fountain that was opened at Calvary, some Jews, probably some of you here tonight...I'm sure...are Jewish Christians. You're part of the remnant of this day and you've entered into the fountain that yet has to be opened for the nation when the nation repents, when Jesus returns. But all of us need this cleansing because all of us are defiled. We all have that moral defilement in our nature and we all walk in a way that is wrong...away from God.

Solomon said when he dedicated the temple, he stood up and he said in 1 Kings 8:46, "There is no man that doesn't sin." And that's true. And if it's true, then there is no man who doesn't need cleansing. David the Psalm singer of Israel said in Psalm 14, "The Lord looked down from heaven on the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek God, they are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy, there is not that doeth good, no not one." And Paul reiterated that text in Romans 3. And so the cleansing is needed by everyone and I would be remiss if I didn't announce to you tonight something you probably already know, it's available...it's available.

You say, "Well, how do you get into the cleansing?" By faith, by looking at the one who was pierced, just like 12:10 says, by looking at one who was pierced for you on the cross and one who came out the other side of the grave and did it for you, bore your sin and believing in Him and receiving Him as



Savior. And His cleansing is applied to you.

In that future day, Israel is going to experience that as a nation. They're going to come back into the place of covenant relationship with God. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse in that way. It's the only fountain that can do it. And Hebrews 9:13 it says, "If the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" The blood of Christ can purge. And so, the cleansing of Israel will be from the defilement of sin.

Secondly, and we'll go a little quicker with the rest. From the defilement of sin, secondly, from the deception of sham prophets...from the deception of sham prophets...p-r-o-p-h-e-t-s, sham or phony prophets. This is most fascinating. Verses 2 through 6, we're going to go by it pretty quick so hang on. Let me just introduce it. The two...now watch this one, this is a good historical note for you to remember...the two besetting sins of Israel have always been idolatry and false prophecy. The two besetting sins of Israel, idolatry and false prophecy. And I would point out wherever idolatry existed, it existed as a result of false prophets propagating it. The two besetting sins, idolatry and false prophets or false prophecy and false prophecy was really behind the scenes causing the idolatry, phony prophets with speaking lies. And believe me, Israel was populated by the boat load with false prophets.

Do you remember, for example, that in the apostate age of King Ahab, Ahab was the husband of Jezebel in the apostate age of King Ahab and the time of Jehoshaphat, there were at least 400 false prophets and only one true prophet. It's kind of like we have in the world today, about 400 to 1 might be a little...we probably don't have that good. On Mount Carmel, one old prophet, Elijah, 450 prophets of Baal, one to 450. The false prophets in the history of Israel have been the thing that dragged Israel down. They slew the true prophets and they listened to the false.

You say, "Why did they do that?" Because, you see, the true prophets called for right behavior and they didn't want to do that. They loved the orgies of the false prophets. They wanted a religion like the false prophets had cause you could do anything you wanted. It was built on the sensual. You could go up to the temple and have a sex orgy with the priestesses. I mean, that kind of religion was big stuff, just like it is today. So the false prophets drew the people into idolatry and God has always remembered this and God knows, too, that in the end time Israel is going to fall again to false prophets, the number one false prophet is Antichrist. The number two is his coworker, the false prophet that you read about in Revelation 13. And they're going to be a whole lot of other phonies they're going to fall for in the end time. But when Christ returns and He cleanses Israel from the defilement of sin, He is also going to cleanse them from the deception of all these sham prophets.

And I want you to see what has to be one of the most fascinating looks of all that we have to this future time, verse 2, "It shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord of host, or the Lord of armies," and whenever God wants to talk about conquering, He calls Himself the Lord of armies, "that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land and they shall no more be remembered and I will clean...rather, I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land." Now note something there, what is behind false prophecy? Did you see it there? Some kind of a spirit. What kind? An unclean spirit.

All the gods of the nations are demons, says the Old Testament. And behind every false prophet is an unclean spirit, either mediately or immediately. The spirit...literally it says the spirit of uncleanness, I will cause the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness. Now, beloved, it's not just a pervading principle, this is an active agency in contrast to the Spirit of grace and supplication in 12:10. When salvation comes, God brings the Spirit of grace and salvation. But when false prophets come, it is the spirit of uncleanness. And the spirit of uncleanness is a reference to the agency of demons and Satan himself who are behind it.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 10, you'll remember our study in chapter 10 and verse 20, the Apostle Paul said, "When you go to the idol temple and do your thing, you're worshipping demons." He said, "I say the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God and I don't want you to have fellowship with demons." In other words, when you go to a pagan religion you are fellowshiping with demons because they are behind it. And any other religion but the true one is an act of worshipping a demon. All false teachers and all false prophets and all false systems everywhere from Mary Baker to L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology and every system in between and all over the globe are all the handiwork of demon spirits, the agency of uncleanness that is spawned by Satan himself.

In 1 Timothy chapter 4 verse 1 it says, "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits...now watch...and the doctrines of demons." They're the ones who invent false religions. And so he says in that day I will cut off the idols, I will cause the prophets, the sham prophets, and the unclean or the spirit of uncleanness behind them to pass out of the land. In other words, God is going to clean up the whole place. All the false prophets are going to get it. There won't be any of them in the Kingdom or in eternity. The unclean spirits are going to be cast aside and if you read further on in Revelation 20 you'll find that the most unclean spirit, Satan himself, is going to be bound with chains for the period of time of the duration of the Kingdom and then cast into the lake of fire.

So, when Christ returns and redeems Israel and sets up His Kingdom, they'll be no demons in action in the Kingdom. That's great to know, isn't it? You say, "Will there be any sin?" Sure because all sin isn't spawned by demons, some of it will come from human nature of people still alive when the Kingdom begins even though they're godly people. They'll commit sin because they're still in the

human bodies and they'll have children, some of whom will not believe and will constitute even a rebellion at the end of the thousand-year Kingdom.

So, the spirit of uncleanness then is a collective name for the wicked spirits that energize false prophets. They are unclean because they drive their victims into sexual and other impurities and they are unclean because they defile with false religious systems.

You say, "Well, I thought Israel was...I thought Israel was cleansed of demons. I thought after the captivity they didn't get into false religion. I thought they didn't have anymore idolatry." Well, in a sense that's true. Ever since the Babylonian captivity, Israel has never gone into idolatry as they knew it in the past, worshipping false images. But they have their own kind of idolatry. And in the end time they're going to have more of that stuff than they ever had in the past. Let me show you something that will help you to see that. In Matthew chapter 12 verse 43, I want you to see a little parable Jesus gives. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places seeking rest and finds none." Okay? When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places seeking rest and finds none. And he says, "I will return into my house...that is I'll go back to the man that I came out of...and when he is come he finds it empty, swept and garnished. Then goes he and takes with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself. They enter in and dwell there. And the last state of the man is worst than the first, even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

Jesus says to Israel, you're that man. And there was a time in the Babylonian captivity when God came along and God chased that demon out of you and God cleaned up that demon of idolatry, as it were, that spirit of uncleanness. But the day is going to come because of your rebellion and because of your antichrist attitude when he's coming back with seven of his friends and it's going to be worse than it was in the beginning. And Israel has not yet seen the terror of judgment that they're going to see in the Tribulation. They've never seen anything like it yet. Worse than Ishweitz(?tape is bad), worse than anything in Germany, worse than anything they've ever endured at the hands of the Arabs, terrible judgments that are going to come in the battle of Armageddon when the demons come back seven times worse than they were there the first time. They're going to hook up with false systems, they're going to buy the line of Antichrist, demon infestation is going to come. But then it says in Zechariah that the Lord is going to come and He's going to clean that all out. And they won't even remember it. All the demons are going to be exterminated. Read the Revelation 20 chapter and you'll see it.

Now let's go to verse 3, "And it shall come to pass," this is a most interesting reaction now to this, "that when they shall yet prophesy after this cleansing is done, anybody who tries to prophesy as a false prophet, then his father and his mother who begot him...and he throws that in to make you realize that this is a close phileorelationship, this is a love bond. Naturally speaking, people couldn't be anymore close than a father and a mother and a child. But when somebody prophesies, his father

and mother who begot him will say to him, "Thou shalt not live." We're going to kill you, son. "For you speak lies in the name of the Lord." In other words, you say you're a prophet of God and you're a liar. "And his father and his mother who begot him shall thrust him through when he prophesies." And the word simply means they'll stab him to death. Thou shalt not live. They'll stab him till he dies. A mother and a father will do that to their child because they'll have such a hatred of false prophecy so that the hatred of false prophecy will overrule normal human feelings. They'll be the first to condemn the apostate to death.

This is what was done, isn't it, in the Old Testament? Sixteenth chapter of...pardon me, the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy verses 6 to 10 describes that a false prophet was to be killed. And when Israel comes to repentance and salvation, Israel will be obedient. And if per chance a false prophet does arise, they'll take the life of that false prophet, even though it be their own child.

Verse 4, "And it shall come to pass in that day that the prophets shall be ashamed, everyone of his vision when he hath prophesied, neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive." Now when this all happens and God begins to destroy this whole thing, anybody who is a prophet is going to become so ashamed that he doesn't want to be known as a prophet. And so he will no longer wear a rough garment.

You say, "What does that mean?" The rough garment was the sign of a prophet. That basically came from the days of Elijah. Elijah wore a rough garment, a mantle, you remember? The literal Hebrew says "a hairy garment." This could mean that it was a goatskin kind of a leather thing with the hair on it, but it probably means that it was woven out of camel's hair, which was what they did. We still have camel's hair clothes today. That would be woven from camel's hair. And this particular mantle became the clerical garb of the prophet in that day. If you wore that, you were signifying a..that you're a prophet. And he's saying here that prophets themselves won't even want to be identified as such because they'll be so fearful, because they see what's going to happen. They'll deny that they're even prophets. They'll disclaim any association whatsoever with prophecy because they see what's happening.

Micah says the same thing about the same time in Micah 3:7. "Then shall the seers be ashamed and the diviners confounded. They will cover their lips." They don't want to say anything. They don't want anybody to know they claim to be prophets. It's...they don't want anything to do with that because they see the consequence when God begins to cleanse Israel from the deception of sham prophets.

Jeremiah 22:2 says essentially the same thing, just to give you another verse. "They shall be ashamed and confounded." Talking again about the prophets. So they don't want to wear the clothes. They don't want to look good. Notice a little interesting note at the end of verse 4, they'll...they do not wear a rough garment to deceive. Oh boy. You know why they wear that

prophetic garment? To make people think they're real prophets.

Can't help but say a word about that. I think there are people today who wear clerical garb to make people think they're really from God. But they're not. They're not. They deceive with it. They're not from God. We have them today. People with all kinds of religious regalia all over them, but they're not from God. And so they use the garb of the prophet to deceive but they're going to junk that garb in that day when God starts raining on the false prophets.

And verse 5, this is what they're going to say, "They shall say, I'm no prophet, I'm a farmer." Worked on a farm all my life. "For man taught me to keep cattle from my..." Oh, you must have another guy in mind, I've been a farmer all my...all I ever know is the cattle...just an old farmer. So they're going to denounce it. You must have me confused with somebody else, I'm just a farmer, never been anything else since I was just a kid.

Then they're going to say, "One shall say to him, Ah, what are the wounds in your hands, friend? What are the wounds in your hand? And he shall answer, Well, those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." What is this? I'll tell you what it is. Let me show you some Scriptures. Deuteronomy, just listen, don't try to follow me, I'll go racing along here, I want you to know something about the pagans. God says in Deuteronomy 14:1, "Now you're the children of the Lord your God, you Israelites, so you shall not cut yourselves." Huh? I mean, it's a sin to get your paring knife caught on your finger? No, no, no. "You are the children of the Lord your God, you shall not cut yourselves." Do you know one things the pagans did? Guess. They cut themselves. Remember the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, what did they do? They cut themselves. This was part of pagan ecstasy...masochism.

"Neither make any baldness between your eyes for the dead." They had a ritual where somehow in praying for the dead, they shaved themselves bald. Don't do that. But he...I wanted you to note the cut themselves part. Some of you look like you've been praying for the dead for years.

First Kings chapter 18...we know you haven't though, 1 Kings chapter 18 verse 28 says, listen, again we're talking about on Mount Carmel, here it is, "And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their manner with swords and lances till the blood gushed out." It was their manner to do that because that was a part of pagan worship.

Jeremiah chapter 16, you find it again, I think it's in verse 6. Yes, "But both the great and the small shall die in this land, they shall not be buried neither shall men lament them nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them." Again, the custom of the pagans was to cut themselves and then this crazy custom where they made themselves bald over the dead.

Now what are you saying here? Back to Zechariah. I'm saying that it was a custom among the pagans to cut themselves. And so while this guy is saying, "I'm no prophet, I've just been a farmer. I'm not into any of that pagan stuff, I'm just a farmer." Somebody's going to say to him, "Well, why are you all cut up then?" And literally the Hebrew says this, "What are these wounds between thy hands?" And most people have determined that what that means is between the hands is here...and so it's in the torso. Some have stated anywhere on the arms or across the torso would be where these pagans would cut or it could mean actually in the hand. But pagans cut themselves in their religion. So the question is, if you're not a false prophet, why are you all cut up? And he's caught and he says, "Well, these are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my lovers," ahab (?) in Hebrew, lovers literally.

You say, "What are the lovers?" I agree with Lumphold(?), the commentator who says "The lovers are the idols that he loved." These are the wounds of my idolatry. You see, he can't escape it, he has to admit it. I was wounded in the house of my lovers. I was wounded in idolatry. There's no alibi, there's no way out when God begins to deal with the sham prophets in the day of Israel's cleansing. So Israel will be cleansed from the defilement of sin and the deception of sham prophets.

Thirdly, and this changes the whole complexion here. Israel will be saved not from something but through something, point three, Israel will be cleansed through the death of the Shepherd...through the death of the Shepherd. Another element in her cleansing. Verse 7, this is amazing text, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd and against the man who is My fellow, saith the Lord of hosts," and then comes this statement, "Smite the Shepherd." Stop right there.

Now from the false shepherds wounded in the idol houses, the Spirit of God turns to the true Shepherd. He's just as much a part of Israel's cleansing as anything. He is THE sine qua non. He is the absolute necessity. They can't be cleansed from the defilement of sin. They can't be cleansed from the deception of sham prophets unless they are cleansed through the death of the Shepherd. And so God speaks in verse 7. The Lord Jehovah is the speaker and Jesus Christ is the one spoken of. And God says, "Awake, O sword," God is going to move in judgment. God is unsheathing His sword. And He's going to smite the Shepherd.

I just want you to know something. That the death of Jesus Christ was the plan of God. Did you see that there? Who calls to the sword? God does. "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the man who is My fellow, saith the Lord of armies, Smite the Shepherd." Listen, who called for the death of Jesus Christ then? Who did? God did. God did.

You know, Jewish people, and I understand what they feel in their hearts, have for years wanted to make sure nobody blamed them for the death of Christ. I don't know why. God even takes the responsibility Himself right here. The envy, the hatred of Satan, the blind fury of the chief priests, the contempt of Herod, the guilty cowardice of Pilate, all of these things put together only accomplished

what God had designed to do from the very beginning before the foundation of the world. He was the lamb slain. So God did it.

And I want you to notice the Hebrew here because the Hebrew syntax emphasizes the word "O sword." The sword is in action. This is a figure of the death of Christ. And the word "awake," it's as if the sword has been sleeping. It's as if it's been set aside. And you know, Isaiah says it's God who does it in Isaiah 53, I think it's verse 10, it says, "And it pleased God to bruise Him," remember that? It was God who took out the sword. It was God who struck it at Calvary. The cry comes from God, "Smite the Shepherd."

Once weeping Jeremiah called to the sword of the Lord. He actually called to the sword of the Lord. The sword is kind of like a vivid symbol. And he called out to the sword and Jeremiah 47:6, he said, "O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put thyself in the scabbard and be still." Jeremiah had seen enough of the sword. But in this case, God pulls the sword out to be used against His own beloved Son. And I love what He calls Him, He says, "Against My Shepherd...My Shepherd." We're not talking about false prophets anymore, oh no...oh no. False prophets aren't His shepherds. His Shepherd was Jesus Christ. Take the sword against My Shepherd. He's speaking of His possession.

And then, people, there's a fantastic statement following that, you've got to get it. "Against the man, My fellow." Now in the Hebrew you don't really see...until you know the Hebrew, I should say, you don't see what this is saying. The word "man" here is an uncommon word for man in the Hebrew. It doesn't just mean man, it means a strong man or a mighty man. So we're not just talking about an ordinary man. He says, "Take the sword against the strong man, the mighty man," and then the phrase, "My fellow" is literally of My union. Take the sword against the strong, mighty man of My union.

You say, "What do you mean by 'of my union'?" The Hebrew could be translated this way, the man, the mighty man who is coequal with Me. The man, the mighty man who is My equal. The man, the mighty man associated with Me in equal status. That's what the Hebrew really means. What a fantastic statement about the deity of Jesus Christ. Take the sword against My Shepherd, the mighty man, My equal...that's what He's saying. My equal.

This is a prophecy, beloved, of the wonderful statement that Jesus fulfilled when He said, "I and the Father are one." The mighty man, My equal. Listen, Jesus is God. He's God. How else can you have Him be Micah's baby born in Bethlehem and Isaiah's the Father of eternity? Unless He is God. Jeremiah calls Him Jehovah Tsidkenu, Jeremiah chapter 23 verse 6. He is the man who is equal to God. He is Jehovah Tsidkenu. And what that means is powerful, the Lord our righteousness. He is God.

Israel in order to be cleansed must have a sacrifice for sin, the Shepherd must be smitten. So, Zechariah shows first of all Israel's cleansing from the defilement of sin, from the deception of sham prophets and through the death of the Shepherd. And now, fourth, from the dispersion of the sheep. You know, Israel's been scattered all over, but they're going to be saved even from that. Look at verse 7 again, "And the sheep shall be...what?...scattered and I'll turn My hand on the little ones." Israel's going to have to be brought back because they were scattered. Listen, after Jesus died, this immediately was quoted by Jesus...I should say the night in which He was betrayed, before He died, Jesus said in Matthew 26:31, "Smite the Shepherd and the sheep will be scattered," He quoted Zechariah 13:7. And it was true. First of all, we saw it that when Jesus died, who were the first that were scattered? The disciples, weren't they? They were scattered. But it was far beyond that that He spoke because a few years later in 70 A.D. when Titus came in and conquered Israel, the whole nation of Israel was scattered. They were leaderless. They were confounded. They were confused. They had spurned the Messiah. They had no direction and they were scattered all over the world. And so, when God cleanses Israel, it's going to be a cleansing from the dispersion of the sheep. They're going to be all brought back.

You know, it just so happens that we live in a time when we can begin to see this happen. Isn't that right? It's exciting, fantastic thing to realize. We see them coming back even now. The verb "to scatter" here means to break in pieces, literally disintegrate them all over the world. And it happened in 70 A.D. and they've just come back and reconstituted their nation. And they're beginning to come to their land in preparation for the final regathering. They will be cleansed from dispersion.

And then he adds an interesting note at the end of verse 7, "I will turn My hand on the little ones." Who are the little ones? Well, it's hard to be positive about this, but I think the best answer is this, the little ones are the believing remnant of this age and of the church age. You know, there were some Jews that turned to Christ, weren't there? Some of them were Apostles and some of them were in that early church in Jerusalem. And by the third or fourth, fifth chapter you have at least 20,000 of them and they're still Jews today who are saved. From the very beginning there were some little ones. They're the same as the poor of the flock in chapter 11 verse 7. They're the believing remnant. And while the whole thing is scattered and they're all scattered it says God is going to put His hand, turn His hand on the little ones.

You say, "What does it mean?" Now listen to me. That phrase "turn His hand upon" is uniformly without exception used in the Old Testament to refer to chastening and judgment. Now you tell me. What happened to the early church? What was the first thing that happened to them once they got grounded? Chapter 8 verse 1, "Against the church Paul breathed out threatening and...what?...slaughter." What was characteristic of the early church? Persecution. And God says even the little ones are going to be persecuted. The idea of placing His hand on them, as I said, is uniformly used. Check it in Amos 1:8; Psalm 81:15; Isaiah 1:25 and Ezekiel 38:12, in those places



uniformly it's used to speak of chastening. So God then is going to scatter the whole flock of Israel, and even the little ones. Even the poor of the flock, the believing remnant, they're going to hit the persecution. You remember in John 15? Just after Jesus had made such wonderful promises to His flock and told them that He would do so many wonderful things for them, He would cause them to bear fruit, He would give them His Spirit, He would give them His peace, and all this, then He says this to them, "If the world hates you, know that it hated Me before you." And then He says, "If they persecute you, remember they persecuted Me." And then He says in verse 2 of chapter 16, "They shall put you out of the synagogues, the time comes that whosoever kills you will think that he does God service." You're going to get it, he says, just like I did. The little ones were persecuted.

So, the message is simple. The Shepherd's going to die. And when the Shepherd dies for the sins of His people, they'll be scattered because of their rejection. And even the little ones, the Lord will allow to go through suffering and persecution that the church at its birth might be pure. And then in the day of cleansing, God's going to gather all that scattered group right back. And so we see that they'll be cleansed from the defilement, from the deception, from the dispersion all through the death of the Savior.

Fifthly, they're going to be cleansed from what I call the devastation of slaughter, verse 8, the devastation of slaughter. "It shall come to pass in that...that in all the land, saith the Lord," now we're up in the Tribulation time, "two parts in it shall be cut off and die, but the third shall be left in it and I will bring the third part through the fire and will refine them as silver is refined and will test them as gold is tested."

Now you know in the battle of Armageddon we studied in chapter 12, there's going to be a terrible slaughter. And here the prophet Zechariah says that that slaughter is going to take the lives of two out of every three in Israel. Now some do not take that literally. And it may not be an exact two thirds. There is a text in Isaiah that talks about a tenth being spared. That may have different connotation, but this is a general thought. The majority of those people in the Armageddon battle are going to die. And just a portion seen here as a third are going to remain. This is the indestructible third, the holy seed. You can't destroy Israel. They have a holy seed. The Old Testament says that. And so they're indestructible. And there's an attempt by the Antichrist and the armies of the world to wipe the whole nation out. But they are only able to wipe out some of them, two thirds will die and one third is left and they will be purified and refined like silver and like gold.

You say, "Who is this third?" Well, I'll tell you who it is. I'll tell you exactly who it is. It is identical with those in 12:10 who look on Christ at His return. Two thirds of the people are killed. They're not even there when Christ comes back. Christ returns, the one third or however many it is, those remaining, that remnant remaining are going to see Christ, they're going to repent, they're going to mourn, they're going to weep, they're going to look on Him who was pierced. They're going to be saved. They make up that third. I'm sure some of them might be the 144,000. They are the survivors. They

are the pure, the people whose hearts were prepared. People who believe, the remnant. And they are the third who enter the Kingdom in their physical bodies to populate the earthly Kingdom. They'll be refined. I mean, they're going to go through a refining process you can't believe. When it says they're going to be tested by fire, that's what it means, folks.

There is going to be such trial in the time of the Tribulation, there will be...there is nothing in history that can even come close to it. In fact, in Matthew, and I'm just about to close but I want to draw this to your attention. In Matthew 24 it says that when this thing happens there shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved. Such incredible fire and persecution and slaughter. And so they're going to be smelted, as it were, and refined and purified, leaving only the precious silver, only the precious gold, all the other rebels purged out. And that little final third is going to be the remnant of Israel that inherits the Kingdom.

You know what it is? It's a whole group through the fire. It's a whole population of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednegos. So, cleansing from defilement, cleansing from deception, cleansing from dispersion, cleansing from devastation, all through the death of the Shepherd. One last point, I call it they'll be cleansed through the decision of the souls. The end of verse 9, "They shall call on My name and I will hear them, I will say, He is My people--in the Hebrew--and they shall say, The Lord is my God." Notice, folks, this will never happen...this will never happen as a sovereign act of God until there's a decision of the souls of the hearts of Israel. It will never happen until, listen, they shall call on My name. You see it? It will never happen. God does not sovereignly redeem apart from faith. And the people that were loami(?) in Hosea, not My people become ami(?), My people. From the midst of the fire they see Jesus Christ and they call upon Him and He looks and says, "I will hear them and I will say, He is My people and they will say, He is my Lord." The decision of the soul consummates it.

And then Isaiah says, "Shall the ransomed of the Lord return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." What a blessed consummation.

Beloved, I would say this in closing. God is a God of forgiveness. God will forgive His people Israel even though they were a part of those that killed His Son. God will forgive you because that's His nature. Who is a pardoning God like that? Do you know any other? Do you know any other God on the face of this earth who pardons and forgives those who kill Him? No other God, so pardoning. And because we are the sinners we are, we cannot tolerate a God less than that because only He can take away our sin.

The fountain is open for you. No need to wait. Some people of Israel may wait too long. They may be in the slaughter of Armageddon and never get to the fountain that's opened at the end. Don't you

wait. Let's pray.

Father, thank You for this word tonight, for the clarity with which the Spirit of God penetrates our hearts. We know where history is going. We know that You'll bring all things to pass as You have planned. We know that not one word that goes forth from Your lips ever fails. We look forward to the day when You are King, when You reign, when the Kingdom is here. In the meantime, Father, our hearts are so burdened and so broken over the many, the multitudes, the millions in our world who have never come to the fountain that's already open for them. Father, help us to bring them, Jew and Gentile, out of unbelief, out of hardness, out of rebellion to the cleansing fountain that is flowing at Calvary. This we desire because this we know You desire because You're not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. For Christ's sake we ask these things. Amen.

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