

Handout Zechariah Lesson 5

Zechariah 12:1-14:21 is the second section of Part II of the Book of Zechariah. Like section I, it begins with the Hebrew word *massa*, that means “burden” but is often translated as “proclamation” or “oracle.” Like Part I, this part of the Book of Zechariah provided the historical countdown to the coming of the promised Davidic Messiah with the words “when that day comes,” or “on that day” in Hebrew introducing each of the prophecies, and the entire collection of oracles concludes with the same phrase which occurs seventeen times (12:3, 4, 6, 8 twice, 9, 11; 13:1, 2, 4; 14:4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 20 and 21). The phrase refers to the day in which God acts definitively in human history to give His people victory over evil. On that day, God’s covenant people will:

1. triumph over all their enemies (12:1-9),
2. the people’s conversion to God will be complete and irreversible (12:10-13:9), and
3. a center of worship will be established forever in glory and splendor as the capital of the Kingdom of God on earth (14:1-4).

The reference to Israel in 12:2 is somewhat surprising since the rest of the chapter as well as the next two chapters are concerned with Judah and Jerusalem while Chapters 9-11 referred explicitly to “Israel,” but nowhere else in Chapters 12-14 except this one verse. The use of “Israel” likely means:

1. Israel, in its collective sense. The book of the sixth century BC prophet Ezekiel refers to the covenant people as “Israel” 5 times even though the Northern Kingdom had ceased to exist since 722 BC and to Judah more than 160 times. At this point in history, Judah is all that still survives of the nation of Israel and, therefore, where the term “Israel” appears to refer to the surviving remnant of the covenant people.
2. The prophet may be expressing the belief that the Southern Kingdom of Judah and its Davidic covenant are the key to the eschatological restoration of all Israel as depicted in Zechariah Chapters 9 and 10.

Yahweh, who spread out the heaven and founded the earth and formed the human spirit within
Referring to the creation event in this way at the beginning of the Oracle accomplishes several things:

1. It provides an introduction to the oracular material that follows.
2. It lends global significance to the fate of Judah and Jerusalem that will impact all the nations and all human beings.
3. By offering God’s creative cosmic works, the verse affirms Yahweh’s universal power over the history of the earth and its occupants.
4. It looks forward to Yahweh establishing a new creation in the future for all the descendants of all humans who came into being at the beginning of Creation.

12:10 ~ The Gospel of John quoted from Zechariah 12:10 as fulfilled in the event when the Roman soldier pierced the side of Christ in John 19:37. The Church has always seen the piercing of Jesus’ chest and the flow of blood and water from His side as a fulfillment of God’s promise to pour out a spirit of grace and prayer upon the world (CCC 766).

13:1 ~ The “fountain” is the first of two references in Zechariah to the river of God that flows from the Jerusalem Temple to cleanse the people; also see Zechariah 14:8 where God promised living waters would pour forth from Jerusalem in the Messianic Age (for other references see Ps 46:4; Ez 47:1-12; Joel 3:18 and Rev 22:1-2). In John 4:14 and 7:37-38, Jesus compares Himself to this life-giving flowing stream:

- John 4:13-14 ~ Jesus offered “living water” (Jn 4:10) to the Samaritan woman. When she expressed her surprise, Jesus said: *“Whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again; but no one who drinks the water that I shall give him will ever be thirsty again: the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water, welling up for eternal life.”*
- John 7:37-38 ~ On the last day of the week-long pilgrim feast of Shelters/Tabernacles, Jesus stood up in the Temple and cried out: *“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me! Let anyone who believes in me come and drink! As Scripture says, ‘From his heart shall flow streams of living water.’”*

13:7-9 is a continuation of 11:15-17 that was a condemnation of the “good for nothing shepherd” of Zechariah’s time. Instead, Yahweh will send “My shepherd.” There are several interpretations of the individual identified as God’s man:

1. He could be the prophet Zechariah who served according to God’s word (cf. Dan 8:16-17).
2. He could be the Angel of Yahweh (cf. Dan 9:21).
3. He could be the promised royal, Davidic Shepherd-Messiah (cf. Ez 34:23-24; 37:24), Jesus of Nazareth since Yahweh’s shepherd will be rejected and struck down by the people in verse 7b. This individual, in his rejection and suffering, opens the way for the purification and ultimate salvation of the people (see Mt 26:31; Mk 14:27).

Jesus quoted Zec 13:7a just before His arrest in Matthew 26:31 and Mark 14:27. Zechariah 13:7 can also apply to Jesus’ judgment on the people Jerusalem for rejecting Him in Matthew 23:37-24:25 and the fulfillment of those prophecies of judgment:

1. The Jews of His generation will be held responsible for the deaths of all the righteous prophets murdered by their ancestors, including Abel and Zechariah.
2. The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.
3. Before this happens, many false prophets will come claiming to be the Messiah.
4. There will be wars, famines, and earthquakes.
5. Jesus’ disciples will be tortured and put to death.
6. The salvation of all who stand firm.
7. The proclamation Gospel of the kingdom to the whole world.