

Welcome to the Wednesday night Bible study here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're in the book of Zechariah. We are in the final burden, chapters 12 through 14. We're heading into chapter 13. We have a couple of real interesting things to look at tonight that are alluded to in the New Testament, as well as our passage. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our investigations, on our fellowship, on the spiritual food that we hope to partake of and store away in our souls for application and future use. Shall we pray?

Father, we are so grateful for your many expressions of grace and faithfulness toward us. When we stumble and fall, when we err and come short, your grace is sufficient and is greater than all our sin. We thank you for forgiveness and cleansing. We thank you for renewal and strength. We thank you for giving us purpose and meaning in our lives and hope for the future. We pray that as we look at this passage of Scripture that deals with these themes, that your Holy Spirit will bless it to each heart. Help us to be encouraged and to see how the application meets our need in the hours and days ahead.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

You will remember that the coming of Christ is at the center of this prophecy. It is at the center of the eight visions. It is at the center of the four sermons. It is at the center of these two burdens. It fulfills and culminates the first coming of the Lord Jesus, and it is the basis for His return that launches the second coming. So the prospective nature of these overlaps in some ways, because the accomplished work of Christ is an issue to resurrected Israel at the inception of the Millennial Kingdom. And so there is both a backward look and a forward look, and we see these things all mixed together in Zechariah.

Now, by way of application, why are we so interested in these things that pertain to Israel, that pertain to the Messiahship of Jesus the Christ, that constitutes fulfillment of Old Testament promises and New Testament expectations? What is the takeaway, if you will, for us? I would offer you three things. First of all, our common rule of Bible interpretation: as goes Old Testament Israel, so goes the New Testament individual believer. We have a twofold perspective, just as the prophecies in this book do. We look back at what God has done for us through Christ. We look forward to what He is going to do for us and through us and with us in the future.

It is so easy to get entangled in the present, the swirling dust storm of information, of circumstance, of conversation, of interactions, both positive and negative. We can be swept away by things that make us giddy with delight and hilarious with a sense of fun and fulfillment and pleasure. We can be dragged down by the burdens, the cares, the thorns and briars that grow where the seed should be sprouting up in our lives. But we are pulled in two directions as human beings. We are pulled upward into what passes for human happiness, stimulation, distraction, becoming obsessed and deeply involved in things about which people say they are passionate. "I have a passion for growing begonias. I have a passion for a game. I have a passion for a hobby. I have a passion for an activity. I love to fish. I love to ski. I love to whatever it may be." There are people who, instead of in a modern and balanced way enjoying a variety of these things, become dedicated, become surrounded by and engulfed in and defined by these things that are in the present.

"I just got finished with one race, and I'm gonna go run another one. I just finished one activity, one conference, one—" There are people now who are obsessive bloggers. "I just finished one blog. I'm already thinking about what I'm gonna talk about in the next one. I'm—I'm—" You know, you notice they don't surf the Internet anymore. Surfing, that's for old people. We know what surfing is. We grew up with the Beach Boys. People don't surf the Internet anymore. Now they float in the sea of the Internet. They are carried along by the currents, and you turn on the rectangular screen and immediately it is all push technology. It pushes. You try to pull up a browser so you can Google how to fix your toaster, and they're pushing news stories at you. MSN and Google and all these others are just pushing stuff. So it is easy—this is my point—it is easy to become enmeshed in the present. I got enmeshed in it just talking about it. I like to never get off at that point.

But we are pulled either upward by good things, good news: somebody is rescued, somebody's operation is a success, et cetera; or bad news: our team lost, they're not going to the playoffs or the Super Bowl; or tragedy, famine, warfare, death, dismemberment, deterioration of the things that we admire about our country or about the world in general or about people. And we're pulled in the present in a variety of directions. One of the unique things about our Christian heritage, the truth of God as revealed in the Bible, is it has two great sturdy lines that attach to us and lift us up out of the present. One attaches to the past; the other attaches to the future. And as we tighten our grip and increase the tension on those lines, we are delivered from so much that would tend to bog us down in the present.

It reminds me of somebody that walks—walks across a thin rope at a height. You don't want either end of that rope to give way. We are anchored in what Christ has done. We are anchored in what Christ is going to do. And this gives us perspective. It takes the immediate things of this life and gives us an aerial view, more context. It is easier to endure suffering when we understand that it is a short duration compared to everything that God has done and everything God is going to do. Paul can say it is a momentary light affliction. Even for us, it can endure for years.

So this is the perspective in Zechariah offered to the nation of Israel: look under the rock from which you were hewn and the pit from which you were digged. Look at the fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Look at the covenant promises of God. Look at what the earlier prophets have warned about and prophesied about, and look at the content of those prophecies. Look at what is coming. What is going to happen?

Well, nowhere is this more evident than in our final burden, chapters 12 through 14 of Zechariah. We have already seen that this first burden begins in chapter 12 with Jerusalem being a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. It's going to be a heavy stone. People will be cut in pieces. Horses will be struck and stricken with confusion, struck with confusion; riders with madness. "I will open my eyes on the house of Judah and will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness." That is a real interesting turn of phrase, isn't it? God says, "I will open my eyes on the house of Judah," and everyone is going to be blinded. The onlookers—God's vision is going to be clear on His people, on behalf of His people. Those who seek their harm, the opponents, the enemies, will be blinded. They will be confused. They will be driven insane.

You look around today at some of the positions that are adopted, the attitudes that are put forward, the words that are said, the actions that are perpetrated, and you think, "I'm pretty sure it's like—who was it that wrote 'Send in the Clowns'? Is that Judy Collins? Somebody wrote 'Send in the Clowns,' and the last line of that song is, you know, 'Send in the clowns, please send in the clowns.' Then they look and they say, 'Oh, don't bother. They're here.'" Well, I think the blindness and the madness, certainly the forward edge of that wave, seems to already be here. It is just—the postmodern world is almost by definition irrational, and rational people look at it and just, at a minimum, we just scratch our heads and say, "You know, you got lights on, but I'm not sure there's anybody home."

So the governors of Judah will look to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for strength in the Lord of hosts, their God. And so on we went all the way down to verse 9: "In that day, I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem," all the nations, plural, that come against Jerusalem. There's going to be a confederation. There's going to be an alliance. There will be an axis of evil, if you want to call it that.

And then he says in verse 10, "I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me whom they pierced. They will mourn for him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for him as one grieves for a firstborn." Him whom they pierced. I did a little additional reading and looking around, seeing what people had to say about this, and there was a fella named Hardy who had a nice observation about this. He said this mourning—and we talked about this in detail last time—because what should we do when we see the evil in the world, the evil in ourselves, the opportunities that God has given to us that we have missed? These people are going to be looking back to the past. Instead of looking all the way back to the promise and the hope in the covenants with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with Moses, with David, they're going to look at how they missed the opportunity to see that fulfillment when the Lord Jesus came the first time. These people are going to look back and mourn. They're going to be sad.

What kind of mourning is it? Well, these similes: if you mourn for an only son, this would be bereavement. You've only got one child, and they are taken away. This bereavement, this is irreversible in the human realm. If you lose a child, they're not coming back in this life, right? So it's not like mourning over breaking a crystal pitcher, but hey, I can go buy another one. It's not mourning over the loss of a crop, but I can grow another one next year. This is mourning for something that has been irretrievably lost.

The second one, grieving for a firstborn, this is another irreplaceable loss, and it is looking at death. You cannot undo the death. Honestly, even resurrection, resuscitation, and/or resurrection doesn't undo the death and the tragic sorrow that ensues when you have this separation that is inevitable, but you hope that it comes in its time. If you have a firstborn, you want them to outlive you. If you have an only child, you do not want to see their demise. They should be burying their parents, not the other way around. So both of these are very sober and deep sorrows because they can't be undone. They're irretrievable.

And then thirdly, the great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. And we saw the tremendous way that God has woven these episodes together of the death of the Benjamites, who were nearly wiped out in Judges chapter 19 and 20, and then the death of Ahab and the death of Josiah, and these two kings who were not recognized as kings in the battle and died and were mourned. There was especially—there's a lot that it says in the historical record about the grieving over Josiah, because he had been a good and popular king. And Josiah in particular foreshadows this good king who is slain under circumstances that never should have prevailed.

Now, he made the decision to go try to fight Necco, and these are not exact analogies. They are connected thematic elements, and this is sort of—this is Bible interpretation 2.0 or 2.5. It's not as simple as a one-for-one substitution cipher. It's more complex, and for that reason it's much more beautiful.

So we saw that last time. And then the land shall mourn. These families will mourn. But you notice that this mourning comes in the same place as the pouring out of the spirit of grace and supplication. The Spirit is poured out in verse 10 in Jerusalem and on the house of David, and then you have this house of David in verses 12 through 14 mourning. They've just received the Spirit.

There is a misunderstanding. I would characterize it this way: there's a misunderstanding that when we have the fullness of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit is all present all the time. So what is the fruit of the Spirit? Love, joy, and peace. It is kind of like saying all Jesus ever did was express love. It is true that Jesus expressed love. He is the embodiment of God's love. He expresses the fullness of God's love for us in bodily form. But that's not all there is to Jesus, and He's not always loving. It's hard to say, “Well, Jesus was just loving on those Pharisees when he pronounced the seven woes,” or, “He was loving on the hypocrites to whom he said that the, you know, the Queen of Sheba is going to rise up in condemnation because she came and made a long trip to hear the wisdom of Solomon. You've got a greater than Solomon standing in front of you, and you won't listen.” The wedding feast that we recently saw in Matthew, where those who spurn the invitation and mistreat and even slay the messengers of that invitation are destroyed and their cities are burned to the ground—Jesus tells that story. And without balance, you have distortion.

In the same way, think about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does produce fruit in our lives of love and peace and joy and many other—the whole bowl of fruit there—but not always. We're not always going to be joyful. We're not always going to have peace. There is a time for joy and there is a time for peace. There is a time to celebrate. There is a time to laugh, and there is a time to mourn.

And you will notice here, and I think it's an extremely important observation, no sooner is God's spirit of grace and supplication poured out on the house of David, at the forefront of spiritual attainment—the house of David, this starts with David and descends through Solomon and Nathan and all the way down to the Lord Jesus Himself—but when they get that Spirit, there is mourning. Each family mourning by itself. They're in seclusion. We say, “Well, the spirit of unity in the bond of peace, and we should all be together, and fellowship is the most important thing.” You notice that these families seclude themselves by family. They don't say, “Well, we just got the spirit of grace and supplication, time to mourn. Let's have a big gathering of the entire house of David, and we'll all mourn together.”

Now, why is this? Why doesn't everybody gather in one big auditorium or one big city square? Why don't they go to the temple courtyard or something and everybody mourn at the same time? What is the purpose of mourning? It is a time for individual reflection, at most small family group reflection. We don't need big crowds. It is hard to concentrate. It's hard to focus. It's hard to pray. It's hard to engage in genuine evaluation in a large crowd. When we pray, Jesus said, “Go off by yourself. Find the most secluded spot in the house. Your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you openly.” Don't parade your prayers in front of others. And what happens when there are a lot of people around and they're not family? It becomes subjective. You begin to think, “What are people gonna think of my prayer? Are they going to think I'm smart? Are they gonna think I'm saying ‘Father’ too many times? Are they going to critique and dissect and nitpick and evaluate my prayer?” The beauty of going off in small family groups to mourn is there is intimacy. There is depth. There is familiarity.

So this is what's happening here. When the Spirit comes, this is not peace and joy and happiness in the Lord and everyone's coming with a song and so on. There is a time to laugh. There is a time to mourn. Why is this a time to mourn? Because they are gonna look upon Him whom they pierced. This is the look to the past. In the past, the Messiah came, the Son of God came, the Savior came, the Son of David came, the fulfillment, the means of fulfillment of all of those Old Testament expectations and promises came. They missed it, and looking back on

that, what is our attitude when we think back on the cross and the crucifixion? Is it a time of joy? Some of the greatest hymns reflect the truth: “Alas, and did my Savior bleed, and did my Sovereign die? Would He devote that sacred head to such a worm as I?” “At the Cross,” “The Old Rugged Cross”—song after song, great hymns of the faith reflect on the sadness, on the tragedy of the crucifixion, even though it is both. It is judgment and it is deliverance. It is death and it is life. It is sorrow, and it ultimately results in joy.

But you imagine these who are resuscitated and who come back and say, “Well, I was in the grave and now I’m back. Has the Messiah come?” And the news is given, and the Spirit is there to interpret it: yes, He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. And there’s going to be mourning. And to digest this information, to contemplate, to be moved, to be spiritually renewed in its light, to come to understand what it is to have deliverance from sin and new life in the crucified, buried, and risen Christ, is something that needs to be done individually and intimately. And that’s why you have three long verses here emphasizing the private, intimate, close-knit evaluation of this information and the sadness that it initially causes.

Well, that moves us then into chapter 13. There is a chiasmic structure in these two burdens and within each burden, and I’ll try to draw that out a little bit for next time. For now, just be aware that 13 sits between 12 and 14. Twelve and 14 deal with similar themes, such as the nations, but in the center there is a fountain that shall be open for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. Notice, once the Spirit comes, the spirit of grace and supplication, there is initially this recognition of loss, and I think recognition of need. In that day, when the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem receive this Spirit, are caused to mourn, there is going to be a fountain opened for them, specifically for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Notice, just like verse 10, the same ones who receive the Spirit, the same ones who mourn, are the ones who receive this fountain for cleansing. Cleansing.

“It shall be in that day,” says the Lord of hosts, verse 2, “I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land.” This is the land of Israel. This is the Millennial Kingdom. Why is it they don’t need a prophet? “I will cause prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land.” Remember, Jesus says, “You no longer need that anyone teach you. When the Spirit comes, He will lead you into all truth.” This is the fullness of the Holy Spirit. They’ve already got the Old Testament. They’re going to receive a copy of the New Testament. There’s going to be no Third Testament. You’ve heard me speculate maybe in the past, I wonder if there might be another, another section added to the Bible, but here God says, “I will cause prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land.”

There’s not going to be a pull in either direction. The unclean spirit that preaches falsehood and deceit is going to be gone. Demon-possession, the unclean spirits such as Jesus cast out in His first coming, will be gone. He’s not going to go from individual to individual using sign miracles to announce His presence. They will already recognize Him. They will look on Him whom they pierced. He doesn’t need identifying miracles. So, with a word, God is going to drive all unclean spirits out of the land. This explains why Jesus didn’t do that the first time. Could Jesus have given one command and erased all unclean spirits from the land when He came 2,000 years ago? He could have, but He didn’t. He did them occasionally. He cast them out circumstantially and individually to make a point, to preview and to announce the availability of the power of the Holy Spirit, the finger of God, He calls it. But in this case, that announcement is not needed because the people who are in the land and in Jerusalem and in the house of David already know and acknowledge who He is. They know He is the pierced one. So it doesn’t need prophets, and the unclean spirits are going to be eliminated.

Verse 3: “It shall come to pass if anyone still prophesies, his father and mother who begot him will say to him, ‘You shall not live. You’ve spoken lies in the name of the Lord.’” No new revelation. If somebody’s going to try to add to—just like the book of Revelation, you remember the curse at the end of it: if anyone adds to the words of this book, God will add to him the curses of this book. If anyone takes away from it, God will take away his part out of the book of life. No prophecy in the Millennial Kingdom. We’ve got all the revelation we need in the Scriptures and in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who will be the truth personified, the truth incarnate. His father and mother who begot him will thrust him through when he prophesies.

This is in the Millennial Kingdom. Can people die? Can they perish in the Millennial Kingdom? They certainly can, and this is the penalty for perpetrating falsehood. “It shall be in that day, every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies. They will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive.” Nobody’s going to go out and try to lead a movement or start a, a new hermeneutic or a new version of trusting in Christ. He will say, “I’m no prophet. I’m a farmer. A man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.” One will say to him, “What are these wounds between your arms?” He will answer, “Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.”

Even a man's friends are not going to let him get away with deceit, false prophecy. They'll start wounding him. They'll run him out with pointed sticks. This is the idea.

Now look at verse 7: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is my companion," says the Lord of hosts. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." That verse is quoted three separate places by the Lord Jesus. It's in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and in John just the part, "the sheep will be scattered," is cited. "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is my companion," says the Lord of hosts. "Strike the shepherd, the sheep will be scattered. Then I will turn my hand against the little ones. And it shall come to pass in all the land," says the Lord, "two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but a third shall be left in it. I will bring the third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on my name. I will answer them. I will say, 'This is my people,' and each one will say, 'The Lord is my God.'"

Well, this is fraught with parallels in Scripture. We're only going to look at the ones that pertain directly to us. In what we have looked at so far in chapter 13, the application that I would suggest for us as we think about these verses in the hours and days ahead is: we have the fullness of the Old Testament, we have the fullness of the New Testament, we have the presence and the power of God via the Holy Spirit, and we do not need anything else by way of revelation. Those who want to mend Christianity, those who want to emend or amend Christianity, those who want to redefine it, to trim it down, to change its form and its content, to limit it to only certain features, who want to redefine Jesus Christ into an idealistic and therefore untrue version, fall under this curse.

And I grieve, I sorrow for those around us today, and there are many who are essentially functioning as false prophets who attempt to do that in the Millennium. You know, we—it's sometimes called a preview form of the kingdom. I don't really use much kingdom terminology, but the principles and the power, the emphasis, the presence of Jesus Christ, we have it in a preview form in our hearts and in our lives and in our midst as believers. We can enjoy many of the millennial Beatitudes as we enter into a, a spiritual preview of what will be a literal Millennial Kingdom.

In that literal Millennial Kingdom, there will be those who try to introduce other views, heresies, they have been called, corruptions, additions, subtractions, variations, and God is going to have none of it. There will be no prophets. They will be driven out of the land. If they're driven out of the land, where will they go? It doesn't say they will be incinerated or they will be destroyed or they will be executed. It says they will be driven out of the land. You see that in verse 2: "I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land." Where did the unclean spirits go when they departed from the man that had the legion? They went into the swine rather than the man. Where are these unclean spirits and false prophets going to go when they are driven out of the land? They're going to go out into the world, and they are going to deceive and corrupt those who are outside. This is how you end up with Gog, Magog at the end of the tenth century of Christ's kingdom, because they're gonna foment, they're going to fester, they're going to metastasize, they're going to infect, and over the course of the decades and the centuries, there's going to be a rising undercurrent of rebellion and dissatisfaction in the world outside the land that is going to ultimately converge on the Holy City. You have this in Revelation. So they're not gone.

Well, guess what? In this spiritual preview of that wonderful Millennial age, the same thing is true. Those who cannot countenance the truth of God's Word in its fullness and in its glory, who can't countenance the fullness of Jesus Christ in both His suffering servant and conquering King roles—they only want the suffering servant—who do not want to see judgment, therefore refuse to see sin, false prophets and unclean spirits are going to dwell in and among these individuals and groups. And if you think there are woes on the Pharisees, think about the woes on these. We have condemnations and predictions about them in the latter part of the New Testament. You go to Hebrews, when there's a field that is rained on and it produces only thorns and briars and it's fit only for burning and is near a curse. You go to the later epistles where it talks about spots in your love feasts, denying the Lord that bought them, because they deny that they were bought, that they were purchased. They deny redemption. Jesus was crucified. It was just a demonstration that, that man hadn't arrived at fullness of love yet. And that was a helpful reminder. You take away redemption, do you take away the need for redemption, which is sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Anyway, you think about these, and what is the application for us? If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. If there is some false prophecy circulating in our hearts or our souls, if we are telling ourselves stories that don't line up with what Scripture teaches us and what the Holy Spirit affirms to us, we need to purge those unclean spirits and those false prophets out of our hearts, out of our minds, out of our lives. Go to God and

pray Psalm 51 deeply and repeatedly: purge me, search me, cleanse me, renew me. Only God's power can do it. It is there for the asking, but it doesn't happen automatically.

Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to continue in chapter 13, and we're going to see this symmetry that we have in chapters 12 through 14 and some of the thematic ties that it has elsewhere in Scripture.