

Let's get oriented as we take another look at our summary slide.

In the first oracle, we saw in chapter nine that God promised a coming Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. In chapter ten, we examined the blessings of redemption for the people of Israel. Chapter eleven is the story of the shepherds. Israel's rejection of their True Shepherd, Jesus Christ the Messiah, the ruin of the wailing shepherds suffering God's judgment, and Israel's future acceptance of the False Shepherd.

Tonight, we begin the second oracle, the final passage in the book, as we begin chapter twelve. Let me preface this passage so we have a framework to better understand it. In broad terms, chapter twelve addresses the repentance of Israel, as we will see tonight; chapter thirteen deals with the forgiveness of Israel; and chapter fourteen speaks of the beginning of the kingdom into which Israel shall enter.

To recap, there is a single word that begins each of the oracles, the Hebrew word 'massa,' meaning 'burden'. It always represents a severe judgment, a heavy weight for the prophet to bear. In the first oracle, **9.1** says **The oracle of the word of the Lord is against the land of Hadrach and Damascus is its resting place...** Indicating the judgment is mainly directed toward the Gentile nations. But in **12.1**, the text says **The oracle of the word of the Lord concerning Israel:**. Now the focus of the judgment shifts to Israel. And the timing of the prophecies in this final oracle is completely in the last days, as the sovereign God brings human history to a close with the day of the Lord. Zechariah uses the key phrase, "on that day," six times in this chapter (verses 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 11), and eighteen times in this book. Watch closely for it. It's a sign of the end-times nature of this prophecy.

This chapter breaks into two portions. Let's begin the first passage and see how God blesses Israel.

## Supernatural Success

Let me set the stage a bit. The timing here is the end of the final battle of human history, the Battle of Armageddon. This first passage, verses 1 through 9, describes God's supernatural power made evident in Israel as they are attacked by Gentile nations and Israel is completely victorious over them. But we know from Revelation that this follows a period of near-complete devastation of the Jewish people, as we saw in chapter 11.

<sup>1</sup> **The oracle of the word of the Lord concerning Israel: Thus declares the Lord, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him: <sup>2</sup>“Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah. <sup>3</sup>On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves.**

This burden placed on Zechariah is for Israel. Yahweh reveals Himself in terms of His past actions. He is the Maker of heaven and earth. The verbs tell the story. He is the One who stretched out, and founded, and formed the ‘rwu-ahh’, the Spirit within man, the same word used in **Psalms 51.10.** <sup>10</sup> **. renew a right spirit within me.**

Now God speaks of what He is about to do – and note that this is all in the context of a battle. He begins with **“Behold!**

**I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples.**

Jerusalem is surrounded by many people. This is the early part of a battle, called the distribution of forces, when commanders will apportion and locate their forces in order to gain tactical advantage. They are preparing to surround Jerusalem. The phrase “cup of

staggering” is illuminating. “cup” here could better be translated “basin” or “bowl”. Hebrew ‘soph’. It is a large basin from which many will drink, not an individual cup for one person, for all the peoples will drink of this basin of God’s judgment, and it will cause the nations to stagger as if they were intoxicated. God’s judgment will cause them to act as if they have lost their senses.

**The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah.** The enemies of God’s people are not just attacking Jerusalem, but all of the region, the lands of the tribe of Judah that surround Jerusalem. **Deuteronomy 28.52-57** and **II Kings 25** describe the horrors of being besieged by the enemy. It was a common tactic of ancient warfare used by many nations, including Israel, casting up earth against the wall of a city until either the wall collapsed or the enemy troops could breach the wall and sack the city.

<sup>3</sup> **On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it.** The nations will shatter themselves trying to crush Jerusalem. On this day, the Day of the Lord, though all the nations come against God’s city, it will be as an immovable object, a stone too heavy to lift. Today, we might call it a “hard target”. Though the nations attack, they will fail. This stone won’t move, but the one trying to move it will be injured in the attempt. This is a poetic way of saying Jerusalem will stand against all that the rest of the world can throw at it. God will make Jerusalem an impossible, untouchable military objective. Though all the world unites against it, the world’s forces will be defeated, and Jerusalem will stand.

<sup>4</sup> **On that day, declares the Lord, I will strike every horse with panic, and its rider with madness. But for the sake of the house of Judah I will keep my eyes open, when I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.** In this battle, God will disable the

nations, causing panic, madness, and blindness. This is God's action, not Israel's. While the enemies are blind, God's eyes will be open toward Judah and His people, which speaks of His awareness and support. This is His battle, not just His people's battle.

**<sup>5</sup> Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the Lord of hosts, their God.'** And Israel will finally know the source of their strength in this final battle. In modern times, Israel has had an exceptionally capable military, as we've seen in recent years, but they have not given the Lord credit for their victories; instead, they have taken credit for themselves. But on that day, they will know, and confess to each other, that their victory is from the Lord, that their strength is not from themselves. The God of angel armies, the Angel of the Lord from Zechariah's visions, is the strength of Israel, just as He is our strength. **Psalms 73.26** says **<sup>26</sup> My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.**

**<sup>6</sup> "On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a blazing pot in the midst of wood, like a flaming torch among sheaves. And they shall devour to the right and to the left all the surrounding peoples, while Jerusalem shall again be inhabited in its place, in Jerusalem.** God will use Israel to destroy their enemies. Blazing pots were like our matches, only a lot better. The result will be unstoppable destruction of the enemy throughout the battlespace. No matter where the enemy forces are arrayed, they will be destroyed like dry brush in a wildfire, but Jerusalem will endure. Many ancient cities, over time, have been relocated for a number of reasons. Tyre is one example. But not Jerusalem. It will be exactly where God intends it to be, right on Mount Zion, **in its place**.

**<sup>7</sup> "And the Lord will give salvation to the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not surpass that of Judah.**

This is a little unexpected. The towns and villages around Jerusalem, in the land of Judah, will be delivered from their enemies before the capital city, and the reason given is that the glory of the rural people may not be less than the city folk. God cares that His people avoid the trap of pride, even regarding His blessings, and He shows special care for the humble: **Psalm 138.6: the Lord regards the lowly.**

**<sup>8</sup> On that day the Lord will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the Lord, going before them.** This is a remarkable and poetic way to describe the supernatural transformation of the people of Israel. The most feeble person in Jerusalem will fight like David, and the kingly Davidic line, the warriors of Judah, will fight like the Angel of the Lord and His angelic warriors. Picture Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, David's great friend. Though he was crippled in both feet, Mephibosheth would fight on that day as David himself. The nation will fight as no nation has ever fought before, powered by divine blessing.

**<sup>9</sup> And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.** Here we find an echo of Zechariah's vision of the rebuilding of Jerusalem in **Zechariah 2.5** when the Lord Himself promised to be the defender of Jerusalem. **<sup>5</sup> And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the Lord.** The word rendered "destroy" means to completely and irreparably demolish, even to exterminate. It pictures the prophecy in **Daniel 2.44** about the rock cut out without human hands destroying the earthly kingdoms of men. **It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end.** When the Almighty God seeks to destroy Jerusalem's enemies, be assured they will indeed be destroyed.

In summary, this will be the most amazing military victory ever. Israel's previous modern-day exploits, including their War of Independence in 1948 and 1949, the Six-Day War in 1967, and the Yom Kippur War in 1973, will be as nothing by comparison. In this final conflict, God Himself will directly fight for them and empower the Jews in battle. This promise reminds us of David's statement about the battle against Goliath and the Philistines in **I Samuel 17.46b-47: that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, <sup>47</sup> and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand."**

### Spiritual Submission

Now we turn to Israel's greatest victory. It isn't military, or economic, or associated in any way with human power or ability: it is their spiritual submission to their God.

**<sup>10</sup> "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.**

This is one of the most significant and memorable verses in the book, and in fact, the Bible. God, in His infinite mercy, causes the people of Israel to grieve and mourn for their slain Messiah, Jesus Christ.

In addition to the tremendous theological truths, this verse is also a great OT evidence of the Trinity. By replacing the pronouns with the divine Persons, it sounds like this.

**<sup>10</sup> "And I (the Father), will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit (the Holy Spirit) of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me (the**

**Father), on him (the Son) whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him (the Son), as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him (the Son), as one weeps over a firstborn.**

This scripture is counted as fulfilled on the cross in **John 19.36-37** <sup>36</sup> **For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.”** <sup>37</sup> **And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”**

This prophecy has been fulfilled in part many times since the crucifixion. God’s grace was poured out in a limited sense – not on the entire nation – at Pentecost, and as a result of Peter’s sermon, many Jews came to faith in Jesus as Messiah; the book of Acts has many instances in which Jews received Christ as Messiah and the Holy Spirit as the guarantee or deposit of future glory; and Paul’s teaching in **Romans nine through eleven** conclude with the salvation of the Jews on a national scale, particularly in **11.26**; and most closely linked is the reference in **Revelation 1.7**. <sup>7</sup> **Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail— or mourn – on account of him. Even so. Amen.** But in the Day of the Lord, it will be completely fulfilled.

Let’s break this verse down a bit.

God the Father is the Actor here. He takes the initiative to engage with his people. He will accomplish His purpose in His people, Israel.

The action is to “pour out,” and it means what it sounds like it would mean. To give generously, to gush out, even to shed blood. The sense is superabundance, a divine gift as God pours out His Spirit.

The recipient of this divine gift is the house of David, the royal line of Judah, and those living in Jerusalem. And by extension, the nation.

What is the gift? A spirit, rendering the Hebrew word 'ru'-ach'. Often used of God's Holy Spirit, contextually translated also as 'sense' or 'mind'. Here, a God-given spirit of grace that is liberally given to the people. An assurance that Israel had found favor with Yahweh, and that He would hear their supplications for mercy.

What is the result? That, finally, after countless years, the Jewish people will look upon their slain and risen Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. They will see him as He returns in **Revelation 19.11-21** for who he really is, and they will understand what their nation, indeed each of them individually, has done. They will know that their Messiah came, and they rejected him, and following their leaders, they would not submit to him as their king, but pledged themselves to a pagan ruler instead, and screamed for the King of the Jews to be crucified. And having seen him in truth, they will mourn, they will grieve, they will weep as for an only child, in bitterness of soul.

The final passage in the chapter is the widest expression of the mourning experienced by all of Israel. All of the nation will grieve, individually and corporately, for their parts in the nation's sin of rejecting and murdering their Messiah, Jesus.

<sup>11</sup> **On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.** This apparently refers to King Josiah's death at the hands of Pharaoh Neco, recorded in **II Kings 23**; the nation's mourning for him is recorded in **II Chronicles 35.24b-25**. **All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.** <sup>25</sup> **Jeremiah also uttered a lament for Josiah; and all the singing men and singing women have spoken of Josiah in their laments to this day. They made these a rule in Israel; behold, they are written in the Laments.** The mourning will be as great as the greatest period of mourning in memory. It will be national, passionate, and yet personal. And it needs to be said here that understanding and awareness of the Person of Jesus Christ, his earthly ministry, his unquestionable identity as the Messiah,



and an extreme sense of grief at his death at the hands of the Jewish religious leaders and people will be prerequisites for this mourning.

Verses 11 through 14 describe the details of the depth and intensity of the sorrow for the Messiah's death.

<sup>12</sup> **The land shall mourn, each family by itself:** the broadest measure comes first.

Everyone, all across the land, every family, each member of every family, will grieve and mourn as they look on the one whom they have pierced.

**the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves;** this represents the kingly line of Judah, of King David. Even the kings and their royal families would mourn for the rejection and death of David's Greater Son, Jesus, when he came as Israel's Messiah.

**the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves;** this Nathan is the son of David and the brother of Solomon, and is in the genealogical line of Jesus according to **Luke 3.31**.

<sup>13</sup> **the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves;** one of the heads of the twelve tribes, Levi, became the father of the priestly tribe, the Levites, and their three clans, headed by Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Aaron and his sons descended from Levi through Kohath, while the Levites as a tribe served in the Temple worship and assisted the sons of Aaron, the priests. see **Num 3 and Ex 6**

**the family of the Shimeites ('shee-my'-eets) by itself, and their wives by themselves;** Shimei is the grandson of Levi through Levi's son, Gershon. **Num 3.18**.

<sup>14</sup> **and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves.** The final description is "all others". All families not already mentioned.

In summary, the nation – the line of kings, both royal and non-royal, and the line of priests, both priests and Levites, and all other people – everyone – will mourn.

## Application

There is much here to apply to our lives. For just as God draws Israel to repentance, so he commands us to repent, as well. Let us consider how we repent before the Lord.

Hear the command **Mark 1.14-15: Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,<sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”** John the Baptist and Jesus Himself spoke the same command: Repent and believe. That is the heart of the gospel.

Confess your sin. Agree with God that our actions, attitudes, or words are wrong according to His standard. **I John 1.9<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

Feel the grief: **II Corinthians 7.10<sup>10</sup> For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.** Grief for our sin is an important part of the process. We must feel the weight of our sin. David is an example of godly repentance; Judas and Pharaoh are negative examples.

Take the action **Revelation 3.3<sup>3</sup> Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent.** Receive, hear, remember, obey. The steps to repentance.

Bear fruit **Matthew 3.8<sup>8</sup> Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.** True repentance will always result in godly spiritual fruit.

Change the behavior **Revelation 2.5** <sup>5</sup> **Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.** Actions must follow repentance. Might require turning around and learning from your past.

Proclaim the message **Mark 6.12** <sup>12</sup> **So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent.** Along with the apostles, we can participate in gospel proclamation as we urge others to repent and believe in Christ.

I would also offer a quote from Philip Ryken that focuses repentance to its most essential elements: Confession is the intellectual aspect of repentance: we know in our minds that we have sinned. Contrition is the emotional aspect of repentance: we feel in our hearts that we have sinned. Change is the volitional aspect of repentance: we resolve in our wills that we will go and sin no more.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, remember this: there is no repentance nor forgiveness without looking to Jesus. We must turn our eyes of faith to Him if we are to know and love and follow God, and turn from our sin to the Lord. Listen to the Spirit and look to Christ. Let's pray.

Close in prayer – final song – benediction: **Luke 24.44-48** <sup>44</sup> **Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”** <sup>45</sup> **Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,** <sup>46</sup> **and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,** <sup>47</sup> **and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.** <sup>48</sup> **You are witnesses of these things.**

<sup>1</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, [Luke](#), ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 2, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 7.