

Zechariah 12

## When All Seems Hopeless

What is God doing when He leads us through times of great hardship and trouble?

The Bible assures us that God is working through those experiences, and it is always for the good of those He loves.

The Bible tells us that God uses these times of trial to purify and strengthen the church by removing those who are not His, like separating the wheat from the chaff.

In these days of crisis, though it has just begun, already most churches are either greatly in decline, or they are being strengthened.

And God uses suffering to purify the lives of those who are His children, stripping away from us the things of the flesh and of the world that have hindered our walk with God; like the smelting furnace separates the gold and silver from the dross.

Many of you have commented to me already that you are taking your faith more seriously than you did before the Covid crisis.

And God uses hard times to wake-up lost souls to the fact that they are in danger of the judgment of God, and in need of salvation.

There are many who are turning to the Lord in faith, because of the trials they are going through. All throughout church history the church has often gone through times of persecution which served to strengthen and purify the life of the church.

But there is coming a time of greatly increased and intensified trouble on the earth as the Lord brings judgment upon the Gentile nations of the world and upon the nation of Israel, because of their stubborn rebellion against God.

We are here to experience the building up toward the Tribulation, and it will be a difficult time of being sifted and of being made more like Christ, and a time of last-minute saving of souls.

But the Bible teaches that there is coming a day, when the Lord is going to conclude His work with His church and He will come back for His church, and take us home with Him in the rapture.

Zechariah has much to say about Israel in the Tribulation, but he makes no mention of the church during this time. The focus of the Tribulation is on Israel and the pagan nations of the world, who are both under the wrath of God because of their persistent, stubborn rejection of God over the past 2,000 years that the church has been reaching out to them.

But near the end of the Tribulation, when the time of judgment is coming to an end, we see God renewing His Good Shepherd's care and protection of Israel, and it gives us insights into the way the Good Shepherd can be trusted to care for and protect the church during our last days as we see the build-up towards the Tribulation.

The Bible teaches that although Israel is facing increasing world opposition and violence against her which will only intensify as we near the end, Israel will survive the world's attempts to annihilate it.

The last three chapters of Zechariah are all one prophecy that reveal the struggle, conflict and victory that Israel will face in the last days.

The amazing thing is that this prophecy focuses on events during the final days of the Tribulation. After years of concerted global effort to wipe out the Jews, with the help of hoards of demonic forces, the Jews, though few in number, are still standing in Israel—because of God.

***Zechariah 12:1 “The burden of the word of the Lord against Israel. Thus says the Lord, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him:”***

The word, “burden” refers to a heavy or weighty message.

Before giving this heavy-duty prophetic message, Zechariah sets the people’s focus on the Lord and who He is.

The church today has a difficult course marked out for us. What is the recipe for success?

***Hebrews 12:1-2 NIV, “... let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, <sup>2</sup> fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”***

Look closely at the wording, the Lord who is telling us what is going to happen in the future, is the God who “stretches out the heavens [not past tense, but continuous active tense] He didn’t just create the heavens, but He keeps everything in place and functioning—He is actively involved in His creation.

He lays the foundation of the earth. Again, a present, continuous active activity—He upholds the earth.

And He ***forms the spirit of man within him***—He is constantly involved in shaping and directing the spirit of man.

***Proverbs 21:1, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water, He turns it wherever He wishes.”***

Verse one reminds us that the One who speaks these prophecies is the One who controls the heavens and the earth and He can direct the hearts of any man to do whatever He wants.

So, there is nothing that can stop Him from doing what He says He will do.

And, as a child of God, there is nothing that can snatch us out of His hand.

***Zechariah 12:2 “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples [referring to Israel’s neighbors in the Middle East], when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem.”***

A cup of drunkenness is an expression that means, God’s judgment and His wrath.

All who come against Jerusalem, will taste the wrath of God, like someone who drinks from an intoxicating cup—their abilities, especially militarily, will be impaired and they will be rendered impotent.

Their armies will become disoriented, like a drunk who staggers, unable to function properly.

This is a curse that God places upon any nation in the last days who tries to attack Israel.

We have already seen this curse come into effect against every nation that has ever attacked Israel since the rebirth of the nation in 1948.

***Isaiah 54:15, 17, “...Whoever assembles against you shall fall... <sup>17</sup> “No weapon formed against you shall prosper...”***

***Zechariah 12:3, “And it shall happen [God guarantees it] in that day [meaning in the day of God’s wrath—a term that usually refers to the time of the Tribulation] that I [God] will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.”***

God says He will make Jerusalem a heavy stone, meaning He will make that city immovable, and the Jews in it, unmovable.

Any who try to take Jerusalem away from the Jews, or who try to remove the Jews from Jerusalem, or who attack Jerusalem to try to destroy it, will be cut to pieces by the effort.

Today we see rapidly growing anti-Semitism among the nation's, especially in their opposition to Israel possessing the city of Jerusalem.

Through most of modern Israel's history, since 1948, the USA has been a strong ally of Israel, and has protected Israel. But with the new Biden administration, America is quickly turning away from Israel, and will one day become one of her opponents.

Zechariah prophesies that one day all nations of the earth will gather together against Jerusalem to try to destroy it. This will happen at the end of the Tribulation.

It is interesting to note that throughout the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, the Jews will be severely persecuted by the Antichrist—more so than at any other time in history.

Then, near the end of the Tribulation, we read this in the book of **Revelation 16:13-14**, “*And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. <sup>14</sup> For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.*”

What is being described here is the culmination of the judgment against Israel that began back at the cross.

**Zechariah 13:7-8**, “*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;* [This is a prophecy of the death of Jesus Christ, given 500 years before He was crucified.] **Then I will turn My hand against the little ones** [Meaning, following the crucifixion of Jesus, the Lord would turn against the Jews. Verse 8 then skips over the entire church age and jumps straight to the Tribulation.] <sup>8</sup> *And it shall come to pass in all the land,*” says the LORD, “*That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one-third shall be left in it:* [Meaning that during the Tribulation, 2/3 of all Jews in Israel would die.]

**Zechariah 14:1-3**, describes this same final battle, when the Antichrist brings all the armies of the world against the city of Jerusalem.

“*Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. <sup>2</sup> For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity,* [But not even the Antichrist with all the nations of the world summoned together by demons, united in war against Jerusalem, will succeed in driving the Jews out of the city] *but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. <sup>3</sup> Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle.*”

At that time, when Israel is in the greatest need of their long and difficult history, God will step in and deliver Israel.

**Zechariah 12:4**, “*In that day,*” says the Lord, [meaning in that day when all the nations, under the control of Antichrist, and demons, are gathered together to wipe out the Jews] “*I will strike every horse with confusion,* [military vehicles and equipment will malfunction] *and its rider with madness* [the soldiers will be struck with insanity—they will lose their minds]; *I will open My eyes on the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.*”

When the Lord says, “I will open My eyes on the house of Judah...” He is announcing the end of His judgment against Israel which was announced in Zechariah 11:9-10 when Israel crucified their Messiah.

“*Then I said, “I will not feed you. Let what is dying die, and what is perishing perish. Let those that are left eat each other's flesh.” <sup>10</sup> And I took my staff, Beauty, and cut it in two, that I might break the covenant which I had made with all the peoples.*”

But at that final battle, Jesus says, ***“I will open My eyes on the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.”***

While God is striking all of their enemies with blindness and confusion, the Lord’s eyes will be on the people of Israel to protect them.

Here the Lord describes the battle scene as one of mass confusion, panic and blindness. The enemy will be prevented from seeing the Israelis, and will therefore be unable to effectively strike against them.

***Zechariah 12:5, ESV has a better translation of this verse, “Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, ‘The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the LORD of hosts, their God.’”***

At that time, when the armies of the world have Jerusalem surrounded and seemed ready to bring the final death blow against the Jews, and all seemed hopeless for the Jews, the rest of the clans of Judah, those outside of the city, sees the battle turn and they recognize that it is the Lord their God is strengthening the tiny, outnumbered remnant of in Jerusalem.

It was when God opened His eyes once again upon the house of Judah, that their eyes are for the first time opened to recognize their God.

***Zechariah 12:6 ESV, “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.”***

This verse describes the power that the small remnant of the people of Israel will have over their enemies at that time.

A firepan was a container used to carry burning coals from one fire, to start another fire.

The people of Israel will be as dangerous to their enemies as a firepan placed in a woodpile, and like a fiery torch placed into the midst of sheaves of dry straw.

Israel will devour and destroy all the surrounding attackers who come against her.

And in the midst of this battle, the Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem shall regain full possession of their city, Jerusalem.

***Zechariah 12:7, “The Lord will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall not become greater than that of Judah.”***

Here we see the intent of God—He is working through all this conflict, to bring the Jews to salvation.

***Zechariah 12:8, “In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the Lord before them.”***

The first line just summarizes what has already been said, “In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”

The next line of the verse describes the power and ability that God will give to the people of Jerusalem in that critical hour when He opens His eyes upon them again.

In that final conflict, the weakest Jewish inhabitant of Jerusalem will be given by God the strength and ability to fight like the mighty warrior, King David, and the greatest among them will be given supernatural strength, the power of the Angel of the Lord—the Commander of the Lord’s army.

***Zechariah 12:9, “It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.”***

The word, “seek” means the Lord will give His undivided attention to seeking out and destroying any nation that will come against Jerusalem. None will escape His vengeance. (*David Levy, p. 105*)

***Zechariah 12:10, “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”***

This takes place at the second coming of Christ. Look carefully at the wording of this verse. This is a very difficult verse for Jews to explain without coming to the conclusion that this is a description of Jesus Christ—a conclusion they reject.

The person speaking, using the first person pronoun, “I” and “Me” is the Lord God. He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth who pours out the “Spirit of grace” on the people of Jerusalem.

This verse is a mystery to Jewish scholars because the text says, “They will look upon Me whom they pierced.”

The Hebrew word that is translated as pierced means to be “thrust through,” normally by a sword or spear, usually resulting in a disgraceful and violent death. Since God is speaking, how could God be pierced, resulting in His death?

Second, if God is pierced, how could Jewish people look to a dead God for salvation?

The answer is found in Jesus the Messiah. He is not only God but He took on flesh and became a man. As a man, Jesus willingly suffered death by crucifixion to redeem sinful mankind; but three days later, He rose again from the dead. (*David Levy, p. 106*)

When Jesus returns to Jerusalem, and the Holy Spirit is poured out on the people of Jerusalem, the Jews of that city will look upon their Messiah and will believe in Him at last.

This will result in the Jewish people greatly mourning over their sin, especially when they realize that they rejected Him and crucified Him when He came the first time.

To “*mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn,*” is using terminology that expresses the deepest and most profoundly intense mourning possible. The repentance of the Jewish people will be a very deep and emotional repentance.

***Zechariah 12:11, “In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.”***

It was at Hadad Rimmon where the godly, zealous King Josiah was fatally wounded in battle and Israel greatly mourned his death. He had been their last hope of returning to the glory days of walking in the blessing of God’s favor upon the land.

Finally, the remaining verses in this chapter describe how extensive and complete the repentance of the Jews will be when, without exception, every Jewish family, and every individual in the family, will mourn over its sin against Jesus.

***Zechariah 12:12-14, “And the land shall mourn, every family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; <sup>13</sup> the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of Shimei by itself, and their wives by themselves; <sup>14</sup> all the families that remain, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves.”***

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