

From Babylon to Jerusalem - (Zechariah) ch.11 & 12

by Zac Poonen

The sermon explores the themes of Israel's return to the land, false shepherds and hirelings, and the importance of grace and unity in the body of Christ.

Duration: 59:59

Scripture: Zechariah 11:4-5, Zechariah 11:8-10, Zechariah 11:15 - 12:1, Acts 28:25-28

Topics: "From Babylon To Jerusalem"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching from the heart rather than just from the head. He discusses the concept of burden, which is a deep concern or weight that a person carries in their heart. The preacher highlights three descriptions of God's creative works: stretching out the heavens, laying the foundations of the earth, and forming the spirit of man. He also mentions the punishment that God will bring upon those who oppose Him, but encourages the people to accept Him. The sermon concludes with a warning against fighting against God and a mention of the significance of the phrase 'in that day' in the last three chapters of the Bible. Additionally, the preacher addresses the issue of abortion and the millions of lives lost as a result, attributing it to the influence of evil spirits and Satan's role as a murderer.

Transcript

And we want to turn to Zechariah chapter 10. In our last study, we were looking at Zechariah chapter 10. And we saw what the Lord says there about the gathering of the people of Israel back into their land after nearly 20 or more centuries of being dispersed.

It says here in verse 8 of Zechariah 10, we saw that. I will whistle for them and gather them together. In verse 9, when I scatter them among the peoples, they will remember me in far countries.

And they with their children will live and come back. And I will bring them back from the land of Egypt and gather them from Assyria. And I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon.

And we considered that Gilead is the land that's today known as Jordan. And Lebanon, of course, is still known as Lebanon. And it's interesting to see here that the Lord says that when he brings the people of Israel back into the land, they will not only possess that land, which is on the west side of the river Jordan,

but the portion in the northern part of Jordan, the country of Jordan, which is called Gilead, and also Lebanon, until no room can be found for them.

And we see before our eyes something of the fulfilment of that, and we will see more of it in the coming days. And it is in this connection that we read here in the first three verses of chapter 11. Open your doors, O Lebanon, that a fire may feed on your cedars.

Wail, O Cyprus, for the cedar has fallen. This is the result of Israel coming into that area, because the glorious trees have been destroyed. Wail, O oaks of Bashan.

Now, Bashan was also in what is today known as Jordan. We don't see Israel having occupied it yet, but according to God's word, that will also be fulfilled. Because when the children of Israel went into the promised land, there were two and a half tribes that occupied what is known as the land of Gilead and Bashan on the east side of the river Jordan.

They didn't go into the land of Canaan itself. And that land which they occupied is what the Lord is referring to here as going back to the people of Israel in the final day. Because it was rightfully theirs, they occupied it at that particular time.

It was part of the inheritance and property of the twelve tribes. And so Bashan also refers to Gilead or Jordan, for the impenetrable forest has come down. And I think this could refer to what looked like something that could never be occupied by Israel.

In the early part of the century, nobody ever believed that the Jews would ever come back into their land at all. Later on when they occupied Israel, people thought it was just a matter of time before the Arabs threw them out. But we see that they have been there for nearly forty years now.

And likewise, these other parts of Old Testament prophecy will also be fulfilled. And there is a sound of the shepherd's wail, verse three, for their glory is ruined. There is a sound of the young lion's roar for the pride of the Jordan is ruined.

The pride of the Jordan refers to the huge trees that were on the eastern side of the river Jordan, in which the lions hid. And all that is torn down, symbolic of Israel occupying the eastern side of the river Jordan too. So really these three verses are a continuation of what we were looking at in our last study, from chapter ten, verse seven onwards, right on to chapter eleven, verse three.

Speaking about Israel coming back to the land and occupying not only their land, but north of it in Lebanon, and east of Israel in what is today known as Jordan. And then, from verse four onwards, we find the subject changes again, and here is something very relevant to us in the church, as well as to the Jewish nation and in their treatment of Jesus Christ. And as we have been looking in the, as we have been considering in the book of Zechariah, that there is a double fulfillment of prophecy, spiritually in the church, and literally in the nation of Israel.

Here the Lord says to Zechariah, Posture the flock doomed to slaughter. And that's referring to the Jewish nation. It was just a short time now, a few centuries, before they would be rejected by the Lord, finally, after the crucifixion of Christ.

They were doomed to slaughter. Verse five, onwards it speaks about the false shepherds, the hirelings, those who buy them, slay them, and go unpunished. And each of those who sell them says, Blessed be

the Lord, for I have become rich, and their own shepherds have no pity on them.

Here it speaks about false shepherds. Leaders of Israel were called shepherds, but here it speaks about those who were leaders for the sake of material gain. They were not concerned about the sheep.

They would sell the sheep. They were thinking only in terms of what profit they could make for themselves from their sheep. They were not true shepherds.

They were hirelings. And all they could say was, Praise the Lord, the Lord has blessed me with money as a result of my being a shepherd. And no doubt they had spiritual reasons to give for the money they got.

You can see how relevant this is to the situation today, where there are people who claim to be the shepherds of God's people, and back down deep in their mind they have never been delivered from the love of mammon and material things, and godliness has become for them a means of gain. Blessed be the Lord, I have become rich, and the shepherds have no pity on the people. It is when Israel degenerated to such a stage, just before the first coming of Christ, where their leaders were only interested in making money themselves and becoming rich.

The shepherds were interested in their own material profit, and not concerned, didn't have compassion for the people, that things had gone to such a stage, that the Lord finally rejected the people of Israel altogether. When we compare the history of the Christian church with the history of Israel, we see a great similarity, because things have degenerated in Christendom to pretty much the same level, where the shepherds today also are becoming rich in many places, and not concerned about the sheep. And the Lord says, I shall no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land.

Behold, I shall cause the men to fall into one another's power, and into the power of his king, and they will strike the land, and I shall not deliver them from their power. And we can ask this question, why does the Lord judge these people, when it is the shepherds who are at fault? Certainly he will judge the shepherds, but he judges the people, because they follow these hirelings, instead of following the word of God. It's a very dangerous thing, to sit in a system, where the one whom you call your shepherd, is not a spiritual man.

There are many so-called believers, who sit in religious systems, the heads of which are not spiritual people, they're not godly people. And the Lord holds these people, who call themselves sheep, responsible for sitting, and by sitting in the system, indirectly supporting a person who is the leader, who is an ungodly man. And that's why the Lord says, that he's going to punish the sheep as well.

And that also is very relevant today, because we find a lot of believers, sitting in all types of dead denominational systems, where bishops are unconverted, and drunkards, and things like this. And they sit there, and they say, we want to be a witness here. Well, you can't be a witness there, when you acknowledge as head, someone who is godless, and someone who doesn't honor Jesus Christ as Lord, and someone who is not a man of God.

And that's what's referred to in verse 6. And so the Lord says, the flock itself, verse 4, is doomed to slaughter, because instead of following God's word, and standing for the truth, they blindly follow these people, who claim to be shepherds, but who are not seeking the glory of God, but their own gain and their own position. And so, Zechariah is symbolically doing this, as a sign to the people of Israel, he says, I pastured the flock doomed to slaughter. And hence the afflicted of the flock, for the afflicted of the flock.

And I took for myself two staves. The one I called favor, or grace, and the other I called union. So I pastured the flock.

There are two things, and both these words are important words of the new covenant. One is grace, and the other is unity. In the body of Christ, it's these two staves that a true shepherd must always use to guide his flock with.

One is the staff of grace, and the other is the staff of unity. Grace, so that we can be free from sin's dominion, according to Romans 6.14. Grace, so that we can overcome all our infirmities and weaknesses, and have the power of Christ rest upon us, according to 2 Corinthians 12, verse 9. My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. That is the first staff.

And Zachariah was seeking to guide these people with these two staves. One, grace. The other important staff is unity.

Now that was not possible in the old covenant. It was a new covenant prayer that Jesus prayed, Father I pray that they may be one, even as you and I are one. Grace for the personal life, leading on to unity in the brotherhood.

You see that these are the two staves of a true shepherd in the body of Christ. And this is why in order to build the body of Christ, we saw that Zachariah was one of the prophets who prophesied building up the temple, the superstructure in the Old Testament, and that refers to us building the body of Christ today. And it is very significant that these are the two things that Zachariah is told to speak about.

Two staves. And that teaches us that these must be the two most important messages that are found in the church of the living God. The message of grace, the true grace of God.

And the other, the message of unity. And, verse 8, I annihilated three shepherds in one month, for my soul was impatient with them. Now, Zachariah was reflecting the impatience of God with false shepherds, verse 8, and their soul also was weary of me.

You remember we saw in the study of the first chapter that Jesus said that Zachariah was slain between the temple and the altar. And now you can see something of the reason why he was slain, because he stood against these false shepherds. He exposed these humbugs, and these hypocrites, and these religious leaders who were unconverted, these religious leaders who were not men of God, and he annihilated them.

I don't know exactly what that means, but he certainly stood against them. And exposed their hypocrisy and pointed out to the people that these people were all hypocrites. And Zachariah's soul was impatient with them, and their soul also was weary of Zachariah.

Finally they got rid of him. Now, there we see something of the spirit of Christ. When Jesus came into the temple and he saw people making money in the name of religion, he turned them out.

He was impatient with them, and I'm sure they got fed up of this prophet who came and turned them out of the temple as well. So we see that's part of the new covenant ministry as well, to stand against false shepherds and hirelings. And you find very often immature carnal believers cannot understand why a man like Zachariah should stand against the false shepherds, and why he should seek to annihilate them.

There must have been people in those days also went to Zachariah and said, well brother, I think you should be a little more gentle, you know, God is gentle and gracious and all that. But Zachariah was not deceived by all these words, because he knew his commission from God. He knew he was to stand against all these humbugs, and therefore if they were to be annihilated, they were annihilated.

No doubt with words he annihilated them. He didn't murder them, but he annihilated them with his words, and he exposed them and stood against them. Then he said to these people, he tried his best with these two staves, do you want the message of grace? Do you want the message that will bring unity among you people instead of division? But they were not interested.

And then he said to those people, I will not pasture you. This reminds us of the words of Paul in Acts chapter 28 when he turned to the Jews and said, it was necessary that the word of God should have been preached to you first, but since you people are not interested, they shook off the dust off their feet and said, we are turning to the Gentiles. And that's what Zachariah says here, we offer the message to you of true grace of God and of unity, but you're not interested, all right, I will not pasture you.

What is to die, let it die. He who will be filthy, let him be filthy. He who will be unrighteous, let him be unrighteous, like it says in Revelation 22.

And what is to be annihilated, let it be annihilated. And let those who are left eat one another's flesh. And you find that's always the result of false teaching.

As we read in Galatians 5.15, very easy to find out whether a doctrine is true or false. In Galatians 5.15 it says, if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. See, if you bite and devour one another, you finally get consumed by one another.

And that's what we read in Zachariah 11.9, those who are left eat one another's flesh. What is a modern word for eating one another's flesh? One word, backbiting. Biting people's flesh off their back.

Backbiting. And that is where people haven't understood the true grace of God, they're not freed from backbiting. And there is discord and division.

Where the true word of God is preached, the grace of God will bring victory over sin in the personal life, and the grace of God will bring unity in the brotherhood. That's always the test. Are people being led to victory in a particular fellowship? Are they becoming more and more one with each other in the fellowship? This is the test of true doctrine.

These two staves. And if these two staves are not there, then we know that that's wrong teaching. And these people were not interested in these two messages.

They were not interested. So Zachariah said, alright, I leave you, I'm going to turn you off and you can just eat one another and backbite one another and live in sin and be filthy and I've just given up on you. It was prophetic of what was going to happen to the Jewish nation.

Just like the Lord told the church in Laodicea, I'll spit you out of my mouth because you're not willing to receive exhortation. You can go your way and do what you like. And then I took my staff called grace or favor and cut it in pieces.

You're not interested in this message? Forget it then. To break my covenant which I had made with all the people. So it was broken on that day.

Yeah, they were not interested in the message of grace. So symbolically, Zachariah breaks the staff and says, this is a testimony that you are not interested in this message. Staff number one, the true grace of God, you're not interested in it? I'm just breaking it and throwing it away.

And thus the afflicted of the flock, I think this refers to the remnant, who were watching me, realized that it was the word of the Lord. You know, there was a time when Jesus said to the Jewish nation in Matthew chapter 21, verse 43, Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruit of it. And that is what Zachariah is symbolically doing.

You're not interested in this message of the grace of God? All right, it's not going to be given to you. It's going to be given to other people. And that those days the Jews missed it.

And today a lot of Christendom has missed it. Because the message of these last prophets of the Old Testament has a particular relevance for us because they prophesied in the closing days of that Jewish dispensation. And they have a particular relevance for us because we are in the closing days of the Christian dispensation.

And the condition of Christianity very often in most places is exactly the same as it was of Israel in its closing days of its dispensation. And so what Israel missed today, we find many Christians have missed. And I said to them, but there is the afflicted.

The afflicted are those, verse 11, who are mourning, who are, the afflicted is an Old Testament word for those who humble themselves and mourn and long. And there were a few people like that, a remnant, who saw what was happening and who understood that this was the word of the Lord, that there was truth in it. But most of the people didn't understand.

And even today there is a remnant of those who understand. And I said to them, if it is good in your sight, give me my wages. And, but if not, never mind.

So they weighed out 30 shekels of silver as my wages. And we want to think of how Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot for 30 shekels of silver. And this is relating to that.

The Judas Iscariot and the high priest and all were offended by the word Jesus spoke. He broke this covenant with the Jews. He stood like Zechariah stood in chapter 11 and stood against all the false shepherds in the day when Jesus was on earth.

He annihilated them with his words. For example, you just got to read what Jesus spoke in Matthew 23 to the Pharisees and religious leaders to see what annihilation means. You serpents, you generation of vipers, how will you escape the damnation of hell and things like that.

And they got angry when Jesus said, the kingdom of God is taken away from you. He broke that staff and broke that covenant and said it's going to be given to someone else who values it. And they got angry with Jesus.

And they got angry with Zechariah too. You understand why they killed this man between the temple and the altar, this prophet Zechariah. And it says here, they took this 30 shekels of silver and gave it as his

wages.

Here you are. Here is the wages. You call yourself a shepherd.

Here is what we think of you. Then the Lord said to me, throw it to the potter. That magnificent price at which I was valued by them.

So I took the 30 shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord. We turn to Matthew chapter 27 and we find this prophecy is fulfilled there in Matthew chapter 27. We read there in Matthew 27 that Judas after he had betrayed Jesus, he came back and it says in verse 5 of Matthew 27, he threw those 30 pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed.

And the chief priest took the priest's pieces of silver and verse 7, they bought the potter's field as a burial place for strangers. Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet. Now we know it was spoken through Zechariah.

Perhaps it was spoken through Jeremiah as well. We don't know. It's not written in Jeremiah's prophecy.

Everything that the Old Testament prophets prophesied is not necessarily written down, but it was certainly prophesied by Zechariah as well. And these are almost exactly the words we find in Zechariah chapter 11. It's referred to here in Matthew 27 verse 9 and 10.

They took the 30 pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel. And they gave them for the potter's field as the Lord directed me. And that's what we read in Zechariah chapter 11 verse 12 and 13.

There was a price set by the sons of Israel. The sons of Israel set a price on Jesus Christ. And it's very important for us to understand the significance of this price that they set on Jesus Christ.

Turn back to the Old Testament and we'll understand it a little more clearly in Exodus chapter 21. In Exodus chapter 21, there's something very interesting in the Old Testament law that explains the meaning of this 30 shekels of silver, the price that the sons of Israel set upon Jesus. Exodus 21, we read in verse 28, one of the laws that Moses gave to the Israelites was this, that if an ox gores a man or woman to death, the ox must be killed.

An ox who gores people to death must be killed. Okay. But the owner of the ox can go unpunished.

But if the ox was previously in the habit of goring people and the owner had been warned, and yet he did not lock up that ox, and then he had killed a man or woman, then the owner also is at fault and the ox must be stoned and the owner also must be put to death. And verse 31, if the ox gores a man's son or daughter, the same rule applies. The ox must be killed.

And if the owner had been previously warned about it and he didn't do anything about it, the owner must also be killed. Now see, but that's all right for a normal Israeli man, woman, son or daughter. But if the ox gores a male or a female slave, a servant in the house, then the owner does not have to be killed because the price, the value of a slave's life is only 30 shekels of silver.

See, that's the Old Testament law, that a man's life is worth a man's life. The owner must be killed if this man was killed by the ox. But if the ox only killed a slave, a slave's life is worth 30 shekels of silver.

And now we see the significance of the price that the sons of Israel and the priests put upon Jesus Christ. That's all he's worth. An ordinary slave, that is what they valued the Son of God at.

And that's what we see in Zechariah 11, verse 13, the Lord said to me, throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them. He who had come with the message of grace and truth. He who had come with the two staves of grace and unity.

Their eyes were so blinded, they valued him at the price of an ordinary slave. And the thing I want to ask is this, brothers and sisters, today, when we preach the message of grace and unity with those same two staves that Jesus came with, do you think people are going to value us any higher than they valued Jesus? Do we see the stupidity of people who preach the whole counsel of God, seeking to be esteemed by religious Christendom, which does not appreciate the message of victory over sin, the message of unity in the church? Well, if they valued our Lord and Master at 30 shekels of silver as an ordinary slave, the servant is not above his master, the disciple is not above his Lord. So it's good for us to humble ourselves and realize that we're not interested in the esteem or respect of any of these compromisers that we find among Christians.

And then, when you value the Lord like that, verse 14 of Zechariah 11, then I cut my second staff, union in pieces, to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. The second staff is also broken. When the Lord breaks his covenant with the people, because they do not respond to his word, there are these two results.

One, the grace of God will disappear and they will be a defeated people. Second, there will be strife in the brotherhood. And I want to say this, wherever the message of the new covenant and the word of the cross is not preached for that, those staves symbolize the cross, the message of the cross.

And grace comes through the cross, unity comes through the cross. And where that message is not preached, there will always be two results. Christians defeated in their personal life and strife in the congregation, backbiting, they eat one another's flesh.

And wherever there is backbiting, we can be sure, this staff union is broken. Wherever there is defeat by sin, we can be sure the staff grace is also broken. And that's the condition of a lot of so-called churches.

And the Lord said to me, take again for yourself. Now he says, let's go the other side. Now Zechariah, you imagine that you are a foolish shepherd, one of these people who are just seeking people's gain, not really interested in their good.

Then see how the people accept you. See how foolish the people are that they will not accept the true shepherd. They reject the true shepherd and put his value as thirty shekels of silver.

Now you become a foolish shepherd, a hireling, one who seeks your own gain. Then they will honor you and accept you. Take again for yourself the equipment of a foolish shepherd.

And the Lord says, I'm going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken. And the Lord's going to punish him, but the people are going to accept him. And that foolish shepherd is symbolic of the Antichrist who is going to rise at the end time.

That world ruler whom we considered in the book of Revelation and the book of Daniel, who is going to make a covenant with the nation of Israel. Think of that. That the nation of Israel, who would not accept

the true Messiah when he came, will accept a foolish shepherd when he comes with all his false teaching.

See that's the tragedy. And that's the tragedy we find in Christendom too. For everything that's written in the Old Testament is written for our instruction.

It's written for us to take warning from that people do not accept the true shepherd. They accept a foolish one. Because the foolish one allows them to live in their sins.

The foolish one allows them to live in their backbiting and gossiping and all the other evil habits. A true shepherd will seek to lead them to godliness. And so we see here, I'm going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered or heal the broken, or sustain the one standing but will devour the flesh of the fat sheep and tear off their hooves.

Woe to the worthless shepherd who leaves the flock. A sword will be on his arm and on his right eye. His arm will be totally withered and his right eye will be blind.

That's the way God's going to punish him but the people are going to accept him. And we see here in verse 16 and 17 the seven characteristics of a false shepherd or a hireling. Seven characteristics of a false shepherd or a hireling.

Verses 16 and 17. First of all, he will not care for the perishing. Second, he does not care in the days of Israel towards the end of Zechariah's time.

It's going to be in the Christian church in these last days too. And this is a description of the Antichrist ultimately but it's also a description of all false shepherds. They will devour the flesh of the fat sheep and tear off their hooves.

Now there we see six things there in verse 16. A false shepherd does not care for the perishing, does not seek the scattered, does not heal the broken, does not sustain the one who is standing, devours the flesh of the fat sheep, tears off their hooves and seventh, verse 17, leaves the flock, that is when the wolf comes, leaves the flock and goes off because he seeks his own gain. Woe to the worthless shepherd! And the punishment is going to be a sword will be on his arm, the right arm speaks of power, there will be no power.

God's judgment will take away power from his life and on his right eye there will be no vision, no revelation. No spiritual power, no spiritual revelation. His arm will be totally withered, his right eye will be blind.

God smites those who seek their own gain with spiritual blindness so that they do not have revelation. Revelation and spiritual power, these are the two marks of God's continued blessing upon our life, that our eye is not blind and our arm is not withered. God's judgment is that the eye becomes blind and the arm becomes withered.

So that's the judgment on the false shepherd, and we must remember the warning we considered in verse 6, that the sheep are also responsible if they follow such a shepherd. We don't have time to look at all those details of those characteristics of a false shepherd, but those who are seeking to be shepherds in their ministry need to consider the characteristics of a true shepherd as the opposites of the things mentioned in verse 16 and 17. Now we come to chapter 12, the burden of the word of the Lord concerning Israel.

Notice again the word burden. These prophets did not get up to take a Bible study. They had a burden, and that's how true prophets are.

That even if they speak from the word of God, it will be with a burden. It will not be from the head, it will be from the heart. Burden has got connection with the heart, something that weighs a man down, a concern.

Zechariah had a burden. The word of the Lord was something heavy in his heart. And he says, Thus declares the Lord, and there are three descriptions of God given there, referring to three of God's great creative works.

One is, he is the one who stretches out the heavens. Second, he is the one who lays the foundations of the earth. And third, he is the one who forms the spirit of man within him.

God is the one who created the heavens. God is the one who created the earth. And there is one aspect in which God's creative work goes on even today, and that is in the birth of a baby, in the conception of a baby in a mother's womb.

Every conception in a mother's womb is a new creative act of God, because God puts a spirit into that little baby inside the womb. See, that's something mentioned there. The God who created the heavens, created the earth, and who puts the spirit inside each man.

You see, the physical body of that baby is formed by certain physical processes inside the mother's womb, but the spirit inside that baby is not created by any man. God puts that spirit into that baby. That's why we say abortion is murder, because it's murdering a being in which God has put a spirit.

And that's why as Christians, we need to take a stand against that wrong attitude. See, in Isaiah 42, in verse 5, thus says God the Lord, notice the way he's described. The one who's created the heavens, the one who spread out the earth, the one who gives breath to the people, that is physical breath, and the one who puts spirit into those who walk in it.

There's physical breath, and there is a spirit in man, two different things all together. And that is why we read in Genesis 2, 7, I just want to show you this verse, it's an interesting thing, that when it says the Lord God formed man of that ground, he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And I'm told that in the Hebrew, that word is the breath of lives, plural.

There was a physical life, and there was a spiritual life. It was a double breath that went in, and man became a living being. And that double breath is what we considered in Isaiah 42, 5, the breath to live physically, and the spirit within.

Man is a trinity formed in the image of God, who is a trinity, spirit, soul, and body. And that spirit is what God has breathed in. Another verse that tells us that is in Ecclesiastes 11, verse 5. Ecclesiastes 11, verse 5, I just mention this because it's relevant to the situation we find ourselves in today, where there are millions of abortions being done in these last, particularly after the Second World War, there has been a flood of evil spirits that have come into the world, leading people astray from the truth.

And particularly in these last forty years, I think there have been more people killed, more millions killed in abortion than perhaps actually human beings have died in all the centuries and millenniums before. It's amazing the number of babies that are killed through various ways. Medical science has become a tool in the hands of Satan to destroy living beings created by God.

Murder. Satan, Jesus said, was a murderer from the beginning, and he's a murderer right until the end. And here is one way in which he gets away with murder.

And very often it is even legalized. In Ecclesiastes 11 it says, in verse 5, let me read the marginal rendering, "...just as you do not know how the spirit enters and how the bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman." There are two things that happen inside the womb of the pregnant woman, according to this verse. One is, the bones are formed, and the other, the spirit enters into that little baby.

And that, as far as I'm concerned, settles the question as to when a baby becomes a living being. Not when it is born, but long before it was born, right inside the mother's womb. And so we see here, God is called in Zechariah, a very relevant title given to him, particularly for these days, the one who has formed the spirit of man within him.

Then he goes on to say in verse 2, "...behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the people around. And when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah." Now, in the succeeding chapters, chapter 12, 13, and 14, we have a special word concerning the last days. These last three chapters of Zechariah are related to the last days, when Jerusalem is going to be surrounded by the armies, as Jesus said.

But like we have considered right through the book, there is a spiritual application to the church, and a literal application to Israel and the physical Jerusalem in the land of Israel. The spiritual application to the church is that Jerusalem is the church, and it's going to be a cup that causes reeling to all the people around, and the gates of Hades will try to attack Jerusalem, but it will not prevail. There will be punishment on those who oppose God's purpose, either for the bride of Christ, or for that literal Jerusalem in the land of Israel.

Do you know that the downfall of Great Britain, as the world's greatest power, almost anyway, before the Second World War, began with its betrayal of the Jews? And God made sure that went down. And right through history, in thousands of years, every nation that has betrayed the Jews has suffered. It's true.

Those who stand against God's purpose suffer, just like those who stand against the spiritual Jerusalem, the bride of Christ. We're not talking about dead Christianity, we're not talking about the Laodicean church, we're talking about the bride, Jerusalem. Those who stand against it will always suffer.

The people who leave us alone, nothing happens to them. But those who oppose the message in the church, it really goes badly with them. We've seen that again and again, and we'll see more of it in the coming days.

I'm going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around, and the sieges against Jerusalem, it will come, verse 3, in that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the people, a stumbling block. The church will be a stumbling block to those who are not interested in the message of godliness, and all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.

You shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake, Jesus said. But it's also true of the literal Jerusalem that Israel will increasingly be hated by all the nations of the earth, and I believe that's one reason why God has allowed oil to be found in the Arab nations. Have you ever thought of that? Why in the world did God allow oil to be found in the Arab nations? I think if some of us were in God's place, we would have

made all the oil to be found in Israel, and no oil for the Arabs.

God's wisdom is superior to ours. And He's made sure that all the oil is in the lands of the Arabs, and Israel is almost the only land in the Middle East where there's no oil. Isn't that wonderful, the wisdom of God? And then all the nations of the earth want oil, and so they're going to want to please the Arabs, and whom are they going to join up against? Against Israel.

That's going to be a fulfillment of prophecy. All the nations are going to turn against Israel, and oil is going to be one of the means by which all the nations are going to turn to Israel. It's all being fulfilled before our eyes.

The wonderful wisdom of God, when we know the Scriptures and we read the newspapers, we find the things that the newspapers don't understand. Why these things are happening like this? Yeah, that's true. And then all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.

And that's how it'll be in the church too. You remember what Gamaliel, in Acts 5 verse 39, advised the early leaders who were opposing that little church there. He said, be careful, don't fight against these people, because if it is of God, you may find yourself fighting against God.

If it's not of God, just leave them alone, it'll die a natural death. There are other cases like that which have died a natural death, but be careful that you won't find yourself fighting against God. Well, that's how it's going to be.

The true Jerusalem, the spiritual one, and the literal one. In that day, verse 4. This phrase, in that day, occurs 16 times in these last three chapters. 16 times.

For example, in verse 3, in that day. Verse 4, in that day. Verse 6, in that day.

Verse 8, in that day. Verse 9, in that day. Verse 11, in that day.

So we find here, five times just in this chapter alone, 16 times in these last three chapters of Zechariah, in that day. That's referring to the last days, the period in which we are living. And that's why these chapters refer to the period in which we are living, not only for the spiritual Jerusalem, but the literal Jerusalem.

This is what, as we have considered, God is doing simultaneously. Gathering together the bride of Christ, and gathering His people back into Jerusalem, as we saw in 1967. In that day, declares the Lord, I'll strike every horse with bewilderment, and His rider with madness.

This is the judgment on those who oppose the church, and the judgment of those who oppose Israel occupying Jerusalem. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the people with blindness. Blindness and madness were two of the marks of the curse.

If you read the list of things that would happen to Israel when God cursed them for disobedience, listed in Deuteronomy 28, you'll find blindness and madness were two of the things mentioned there. And that is the curse that God is going to put on people who oppose the literal or the spiritual Jerusalem. Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, a strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem through the Lord of hosts, their God.

See, Judah is the whole tribe, Jerusalem is the capital. Judah is that whole nation, and Jerusalem is the capital. And because of Jerusalem, Judah is protected.

And in that day, I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves. In other words, though they are small, they'll be like a little fire that sets all the dry sheaves around them on fire. And we can see that literally happening in Israel, that all the Arab nations surrounding Israel are just mortally scared of this little group of people that have gathered together themselves in Israel.

If they fight, they lose. The Arabs end up losing more when they fight each time, and so they stop fighting. It's exactly like this, a flaming torch that suddenly catches all the dry sheaves on fire, and all that area is burnt up.

The Six Day War in 1967 was a clear example of this. They'll consume on the right hand, and that is occupying what is known as the West Bank of Jordan, and on the left, all the way into Egypt as well, all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem. That happened in 1967, when Israel went to the left and the right like a flaming torch, went around all over, and occupied lands on all sides, and occupied Jerusalem as well.

It's being fulfilled before our eyes. And then, it's a picture, those three verses, of the Lord fighting for Israel. There are many stories that come down to us from the Israeli army in those days of supernatural help from the Lord at that time.

It's not that the people of Israel are God-fearing. Even in Israel, as we considered when we studied Revelation, there's only a remnant. But for the fulfillment of God's purposes, He's accomplishing something in that land today.

We're not on the side of Israel, we're not on the side of the Arabs. We are on the side of the Lord, and we are building His church. We're just saying that we see a fulfillment of prophecy before our eyes.

And it says here, the Lord will save the tents of Judah first, in order that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not be magnified above Judah. You see, Judah is the state, Jerusalem is the capital, and in Jerusalem is the still smaller group, the elite group, which is the house of David, the royal family. But so that the royal family, the house of David, and the city of Jerusalem do not become proud, it says the Lord will save the tents of Judah first.

From the least to the greatest, we read in Hebrews 8-11. The new covenant is, they shall all know me, beginning with the least. And when the Lord defends us, as we considered in verses 4-6, against all our enemies, it's a very relevant passage for us spiritually.

If you apply this passage to us spiritually, and we find the Lord fighting for us on every side, consuming our enemies, apply this to us spiritually, not to Israel literally now, but to the church, to the north, the south, the east, the west, the Lord enables us to stand against opposition, and build Jerusalem as the bride of Christ in purity, against the horse of wickedness, and evil forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. And when the Lord saves us from all these, our spiritual enemies, do you know what he has to save us from next? Spiritual pride. And that's what's referred to in verse 7. Lest they magnify themselves above the others.

Lest certain believers begin to magnify themselves above others, and despise them, and say, the Lord has done this for me. And they despise others in their heart, because they think they themselves are righteous. And that is a much more difficult thing for God to do.

It's easy for God to save us from our enemies on other sides, but it's so difficult for God to save us from spiritual pride. There is where God has to really protect us. And there is where we need to be grounded in humility when we see God working for us, left, right, front, back, all sides, to keep our face in the dust, so that there is hope.

And then verse 8, in that day, the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He'll save them from pride and defend them. He defends us from pride first, as we've seen that.

Otherwise it's no use defending us. This is one reason why it takes a long time for many people to come to victory over sin. And the one who is feeble among them, in that day, will be like David.

And the house of David will be like God. And like the angel of the Lord before them. And come back on that day, I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Notice the sequence, in between we have this verse 7, that he wants to save us from pride, and then verse 9, that he'll destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. You see, this is so true in this matter of seeking victory over sin. Many people wonder why it takes so long to come to a life of victory, and here is the reason.

Because it takes quite a while for God to bring us to the place where we, when we defeat the nations that dwell in our flesh, and when we defeat these spirit forces in the heavenly places that are leading us and tempting us to sin, that we overcome, to keep us from spiritual pride at that time, is quite a task for God to achieve. God has to break us down and break us down and humble us so much, so that when we do get victory, we don't exalt ourselves, magnify ourselves, as it says in verse 7, for that would be the spirit of the antichrist, the foolish shepherd. And it is because it is so difficult to keep us from magnifying ourselves, that it takes so long for many people to get victory.

Why does God allow you to fall now and then? It's not his perfect will. It's not God's will that we should fall. He's able to keep us from falling.

Any believer who falls into sin is not living in God's perfect will. It's not God's will that we should fall into sin. That's a devil's lie who says you have to keep on falling.

Why do we fall then? Because God sees we can't handle spiritual pride yet. We haven't learnt our lesson yet. He's got to rub our nose in the muck of our own sin a little more, the muck of our own self-confidence, till it's all shattered, till we can get victory with humility.

And when that happens, then the weakest person in the church will be like David, and David himself will be like God, reflecting and radiating God's likeness. And then, here is what God is going to do, and how he is going to lead us into this life. I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Holy Spirit.

This is God's answer, and this is why the devil has made this subject a matter of tremendous controversy in Christendom, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Because if you get Christians fighting about a doctrine, you can make sure they never enter into the experience. Brothers and sisters, never get into a doctrinal argument about the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

It's not something to be argued about, it's something to be experienced. And it can be experienced by those who are hungering and thirsting. I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of

Jerusalem the Spirit of Grace.

Notice that word again. Sin shall not have dominion over you, because you are not under law, but under grace. The Spirit is called the Spirit of Grace.

In Hebrews 10.29, he's also called the Spirit of Grace. The Spirit that communicates grace. Grace to help us in our time of need.

Grace that is sufficient for every situation we find ourselves in. The Spirit of Grace, and the second thing he's called is the Spirit of Supplication. Or we can say the Spirit of Groaning.

The Spirit of Grace and the Spirit of Groaning. Let's look at the Spirit of Groaning in Romans 8 and verse 26. And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness, for we don't know how to pray as we should.

But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings. Two deeper words. What are these groanings about? Those groanings are described in verse 23 of Romans 8. We ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves.

For what? For the redemption of our body. Lord, when will I stop committing sin with this body? When will I stop sinning with my tongue and my eyes and stop saying foolish things? There's a groaning, a longing for perfection. It's the groaning in Romans 7.24. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death, from the deeds of this body? I want to do good, but something which is not perfect comes forth, and I judge myself that because I'm groaning to be free.

Praise God. God's going to pour on us the Spirit of Grace and Groaning. Grace and Groaning.

Never forget, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Grace and Groaning. The one who gives grace and the one who gives groaning. And what is he going to do? He's going to show us, Zechariah 12.10, Jesus Christ and him crucified.

We read that in 2 Corinthians 3.18, the Holy Spirit shows us the glory of the Lord as in a mirror. But particularly one aspect of the glory of the Lord, and that is Christ crucified, and our old man crucified with him. And it says here, they shall look on me whom they have pierced.

Lord, my old man was crucified with you, that's why you were pierced. Why was he pierced? For my sins. They shall look on me whom they have pierced, the Lord says.

And they will mourn. It's the people who mourn who are comforted. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted by whom? By the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be filled with the Holy Spirit. That's the meaning of that verse in Matthew 5. And they will mourn for this one whom they have pierced. As one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over him, like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

And in that day there will be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimon in the plain of Megiddo. And that refers to a mourning that is described in 2 Chronicles 35, verse 24, where Josiah the king was killed, and there was a great mourning. That's the reference in verse 11.

But the point is, there's going to be a mourning. Verse 12, the land will mourn every family by itself. The family of the house of David, that is the kingly family, will mourn.

And their wives by themselves, the family of the house of Nathan. Nathan was one of the sons of David, but not the kingly line. You know, the kingly line of David is described in Matthew chapter 1, through whom Joseph came.

If there was a king in Israel, in the time of Jesus, Joseph would have been the rightful king of Israel. Did you know that? And his eldest son, legally, Jesus, should have been the rightful king. That's the description.

That's why the genealogy of Jesus is given in Matthew 1. But the genealogy of Mary, given in Luke chapter 3, Mary did not come through the royal line. She came through the line of Nathan, described there in Luke's gospel, in chapter 3. The line of the common people, and then the family of the house of Levi, verse 13, the priests, Zechariah 12, 13, and the family of the Shimeites, that is one of the grandchildren of Levi, all the families that remain, every family by itself, their wives by themselves. There's going to be a mourning among kings, commoners, priests, priestly families, wives, women.

All are going to mourn, because they look on him whom they have pierced. Now this is going to be literally fulfilled in the day that Jesus comes back in glory. Remember Revelation chapter 1, in verse 7 it says, Behold, every eye shall see him.

He's coming with the clouds. Every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. That is the Jewish nation.

The Jewish nation is going to see him. And in that day, the God-fearing remnant, who are waiting for the first coming of the Messiah, will see Jesus, recognize him as the Messiah, and then discover to their shock that this was the one who had already come once, and this was the second coming. They will look on him whom they have pierced.

Just like Thomas the Jew, who saw Jesus, he who was pierced, he said, except I see the prince in his hands, I will not believe. Like Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. These were two Jews who were converted, like them.

Many others will see him whom they have pierced. Saul of Tarsus opposed Jesus, but finally he saw him and he was converted. They are like, as it were, forerunners of that Jewish remnant that's going to see Jesus and be converted in the final day.

And it's really exciting to read all this and see it being fulfilled before our eyes. And to apply it to ourselves, that in our life there might be a mourning, a groaning, to be free for the redemption of our body, to be free from sin, so that in our bodies Jesus Christ might be glorified. That the spirit of grace and groaning will be upon us, that we might look more carefully at him who was pierced, pierced by our sins, who crucified our old man with him on the cross, who came in our flesh and took our sin, that we might be free.

Even today this third of God is being poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the bride of Christ. We praise God for his word.

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