

The Shepherd Savior

Zechariah 13

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Zechariah 13:1-6 – Idolatry Cut Off

“In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.

² *“It shall be in that day,” says the Lord of hosts, “that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land. ³ It shall come to pass that if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who begot him will say to him, ‘You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the Lord.’ And his father and mother who begot him shall thrust him through when he prophesies.*

⁴ *“And it shall be in that day that every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive. ⁵ But he will say, ‘I am no prophet, I am a farmer; for a man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.’ ⁶ And one will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ Then he will answer, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’”*

What time-period is meant by, “in that day”?

Zechariah 12 ended with Israel's return to the LORD through the once rejected but now embraced Messiah.

- Flowing from their embrace of the Messiah, they now enjoy a fountain that brings cleansing for sin and for uncleanness. The cleansing comes after their mourning for the One whom they have pierced.

What does the idea of a sin-cleansing fountain bring to mind?

The idea of God being a fountain to His people is found frequently in the Old Testament, but Zechariah's treatment is possibly the richest of all. It has also been a part of famous hymns:

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

(William Cowper)

Foul, I to the Fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee.

(Augustus Toplady)

Why is a fountain a good analogy of God's provision?

According to the verse before us this provision is inexhaustible. There is a fountain opened; not a cistern nor a reservoir, but a fountain. A fountain continues to bubble up, and is as full after fifty years as at the first; and even so the provision and the mercy of God for the forgiveness and the justification of our souls continually flows and overflows.

The overflowing love of God brings to mind:

Luke 6:38 – *Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.*

There are great blessings in being faithful to our Creator, greater than we can even expect...

Psalm 34:8 – *Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!*

What is the only thing that can cleanse us of sin?

For sin and for uncleanness: The only thing that can cleanse sin and uncleanness is God's fountain. Our own works can't cleanse us – only God's provision: Jesus paying the penalty for our sin by dying for us on the cross.

v2 – What specifically will be cleansed in Israel?

I will cut off the names of the idols ... I will also cause the prophets and unclean spirits to depart from the land:

Idolatry and false prophecy were the two principle ways Israel was led astray from God. God not only provides a fountain to cleanse, but He also promises to cut off the source of uncleanness - in this case, idolatry and false prophecy.

Does idolatry still exist in Israel today?

- When you see the gaudy and ornate shrines that supposedly mark holy sites in Israel today, you see that idolatry is still alive and well in the Holy Land.
- But even more significant... the secular life-style of the average Jew in Israel is one of idolatry: a worship of self over the Creator-God.

How is it that idols will no longer be remembered in Israel?

God promises ultimately to take away even the memory of their sin of idolatry. This will only be the case during the Millennial Kingdom.

- While this could also apply to the Eternal State, the context here indicates that this is in the time-frame of Israel embracing their Messiah as a nation.

v3 – When will the false prophets and unclean spirits depart from Israel?

This has to be the Millennial Kingdom when public opinion will not tolerate false prophets. There will be such a commitment to the LORD and His truth that even the family of a false prophet will condemn the false prophet.

Are false prophets a problem today?

That is why there is so much fervor over the idea that Twitter may stop censoring any opinions that are in opposition to the dominate ungodly worldview.

- Fake news and disinformation as propaganda are rampant in the media today. It is not possible to recognize the truth without spiritual discernment.

What is spiritual discernment?

Discernment is defined as “the quality of being able to grasp and comprehend what is obscure; an act of perceiving something; a power to see what is not evident to the average mind.”

- The definition also stresses accuracy, as in “the ability to see the truth.” Spiritual discernment is the ability to tell the difference between truth and error. It is basic to having wisdom.

Why would God make spiritual truth so obscure?

Isaiah 55:8-9 – *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.*

Jesus, speaking to His disciples about the Pharisees, said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given” (Matthew 13:11). Satan has “blinded the minds of unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 4:4), so God must shed light

on the human mind to enable us to understand truth. It is impossible to attain wisdom without God.

- He gives discernment or takes it away (Job 12:19-21).

What enables us to have spiritual discernment?

1 Corinthians 2:14 – *the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

The prerequisite for having spiritual discernment is to be born again and thus having the presence of the Holy Spirit. But we can enhance our spiritual discernment by growing in our knowledge of the Lord, applying His truths to our lives and deliberately conforming our thoughts to His thoughts (WWJD).

How have we seen false prophets in the USA?

- The censorship of people who have a differing opinion from the ruling elite as seen during COVID.
- The DHS Disinformation Governance Board announced by Joe Biden following the Musk takeover of Twitter.

How is censoring speech a concept right out of George Orwell’s 1984?

Orwell’s Ministry of Truth defined what is truth generating lies that must be believed... $2 + 2 = 5$. Believe it or you are an enemy of the state.

Why must authoritarians censor free speech?

John 3:19 – *light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

Authoritarians cannot tolerate the truth about themselves and must squelch any speech that exposes them.

How is free speech a biblical concept?

You cannot express the Truth unless you have freedom of speech. And truth has a way of making itself known when there is true freedom in the marketplace of ideas.

Proverbs 12:22 – *Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal truthfully are His delight.*

God is in control and He will arrange for the truth to win out over lies which are of the devil...

John 8:44 – *You are of your father the devil... for he is a liar and the father of it.*

Ultimately those who stand against the truth are against God because Jesus personifies the truth:

John 14:6 – *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*

How is free speech connected to freedom of religion?
guaranteed by the 1st amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The founders of the United States believed that mankind has certain “inalienable rights” including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Under that umbrella of liberty falls freedom of speech.

- God created man with a free will. Christians believe that serving God and enjoying a relationship with Him is the ultimate liberty.

How does spiritual freedom from sin relate to political freedom of speech?

It doesn't necessarily relate directly, but speaking the truth in love is a biblical mandate (Ephesians 4:15). Therefore, any government law that guarantees citizens the right to speak the truth aligns with godly principles.

- By the same token, any law that suppresses a person's right to speak truth is working against God's command.

v4-5 – What else will cause false prophets to disappear during the Millennial Kingdom?

Every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies: Those who posed as prophets will so fear exposure that they will deny ever having made such a claim. They will put away the "uniform" of the prophets (a robe of coarse hair) and earn an honest living.

v6 – What are the wounds on the hands of the false prophets?

Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends: The man accused of being a false prophet insists the scars on his body are not the self-inflicted wounds often associated with false prophets, but merely the result of a brawl in his friend's house.

- It wasn't unusual for false prophets to wound or mutilate themselves in the service of idols (1 Kings 18:28, Jeremiah 48:37).

Why couldn't this be a Messianic prophecy?

I was wounded in the house of my friends: Some take this as another Messianic prophecy in Zechariah, because Jesus was clearly wounded by those who should have been His friends. Nevertheless, the context and the original Hebrew argue against this referring to Jesus and His wounds.

- The Hebrew is more literally between your hands, that is on the body, whether the chest or the back.

Zechariah 13:7-9 – The Shepherd Savior

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;
Then I will turn My hand against the little ones.*

⁸ *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:

⁹ *I will bring the one-third through the fire,*

Will refine them as silver is refined,

And test them as gold is tested.

They will call on My name,

And I will answer them.

I will say, ‘This is My people’;

And each one will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’ ”

v7 – Who is “My Shepherd”?

The Shepherd is Jesus the Messiah... In the context, and especially in light of the quotation of this passage by Jesus:

Matthew 26:31 – *Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ ”*

So, it is God the Father Himself who calls for the Shepherd to be struck.

What are the implications that Jesus went to the cross as a result of the command of the Father?

Zechariah relates a thought also said here:

Isaiah 53:10 – *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him;
He has put Him to grief.*

The prophets Isaiah and Zechariah state that the suffering of the Servant of the LORD was ordained by the LORD. This was God's doing!

- Jesus was no victim of circumstance or at the mercy of political or military power. It was the planned, ordained work of the LORD God, prophesied by Isaiah hundreds of years before it happened.

- This was God's victory, not Satan's or man's triumph.

The Father and the Son worked together at the cross.

2 Corinthians 5:19 – *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself*

Though Jesus was treated as if He were an enemy of God, He was not. Even as Jesus was punished as if He were a sinner, He was performing the most holy service unto God the Father ever offered.

How is Jesus the “True Shepherd”?

John 10:1-2 – *he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*

By referring to Himself as the True Shepherd, Jesus was invoking imagery that would have been familiar to His hearers. The declarations in John 10 present a complete picture of the Lord who is our Shepherd (Psalm 23).

- Jesus is the True Shepherd who guards His sheep, the Good Shepherd who gives His life for them, and the Doorway to heaven for the sheep who know Him and are known by Him.

Who is “My Companion”?

The ancient Hebrew word for “My Companion” is used in Leviticus 6:2 and 18:20 to mean a “near neighbor.” This describes someone who is more than a friend of the Father-God; this Shepherd “dwells side by side with Him, His equal.

- God would not use this term for any man either godly or ungodly whom he might have appointed shepherd over a nation. This term can only be one who participates in the divine nature, or is essentially divine.

What is the sheep that will be scattered when the Shepherd is struck?

Jesus quoted this phrase from Zechariah 13:7 in Matthew 26:31 in reference to the scattering of His disciples during His arrest and suffering. The disciples were a type of Israel as a whole that was scattered in AD 70.

John 10:15-16 – *I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.*

What is meant by God saying, “I will turn my hand upon the little ones”?

The commentators I usually use (David Guzik, Blue Letter Bible, J. Vernon McGee) did not touch this so I had to turn to the Matthew Henry commentary, my last resort due to the archaic language but it is exhaustive...

- This may be understood as a warning (as Christ suffered, so shall his disciples).
- Or, it could refer to God gathering Christ's scattered disciples at the meeting in Galilee. Though the little ones among Christ's soldiers may be dispersed, they shall rally again.

Or (my thought), it could refer to the state of Israel during the diaspora... the holocaust comes to mind.

v8-9 – Who is the one-third that will make it through the fire?

After the dispersion of Israel there will come a time of devastation and purification through fiery trials of the Great Tribulation. Two-thirds will be destroyed and the remaining third will be preserved to make it into the Millennial Kingdom.

- No wonder these years are called the time of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30:7), and why Jesus said the Great Tribulation will be the most horrific time in human history (Matthew 24:21).

Why would God put Israel through the terrible time of Jacob's trouble?

It is a time of purification and testing... *Will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested.* Only those who would truly embrace Him as Messiah will be left to enter the Millennial Kingdom. As Jesus said...

Matthew 22:14 – *For many are called, but few are chosen.*

He also made a similar statement in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 7:13-14 – *Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

Why is it that most people in this world will not be joining us in heaven?

The love of God... God loves us so much that He wanted us to experience the depth of relationship with Him that could only happen if we are truly free to accept or reject a relationship with Him. Sadly, most will exercise their free will to reject that relationship.

The context of “*many are called but few are chosen*” is the conclusion to the Parable of the Wedding Feast. Jesus spoke this parable to show what the kingdom of heaven will be like when the end of the age comes.

- In the parable, the king sends his servants out to gather guests to the wedding feast. But those invited refused to come, some because they were too busy with their own worldly pursuits and some because they were positively hostile toward the king.
- So, the king commands his servants to go out and invite anyone they find, and many come and fill the wedding hall.
- But the king sees one man without wedding clothes, and he sends him away. Those who try to come without the covering of the blood of Christ for their sins are inadequately clothed and will be sent into “outer darkness,” (v. 13) i.e., hell.

How do we know if we are among the few that are chosen?

By responding to the call. Assurance of this call is from the Holy Spirit...

Romans 8:16 – The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

When will Israel call on God's name as a nation (all the people including the religious & political leaders)?

This prophetically refers to the Jewish people who survive the Great Tribulation, come to salvation in the second half of that final period and welcome Jesus in the name of the LORD. This group, including the 144,000 of Revelation 7 and 14, will make up the core of a restored Israel as Jesus establishes His millennial rule over the earth.

What applications to what we discussed today stand out?

- God's blessings surpass our expectations... thus we should have an attitude of gratitude.
- False prophets are a sign of the times... get on with God's call.
- Spiritual discernment is important... this is not a good time to remain a babe in Christ.
- The attacks on free speech is an attack on God, more signs of the end of the Age... so live ready!
- Few are chosen so we have a target rich environment for evangelism... take advantage of it and share the gospel!