

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION TO ZECHARIAH 12

This chapter contains a prophecy of the defence, protection, and salvation of the church of God; and of the effusion of the Spirit; and of the conversion of the Jews in the latter day. It begins with a title and preface, describing the power of God, from the creation of the heavens and earth, and soul of man, (~~<3820>~~Zechariah 12:1) then follows the subject matter of the prophecy, in a way of judgment upon the enemies of the people of God, and in a way of salvation to them. The judgments on their enemies are signified by various metaphors; by Jerusalem's being a cup of trembling, a burdensome stone, and a hearth, and torch of fire to them, (~~<3820>~~Zechariah 12:2,3,6). The effects of which are to them astonishment, madness, blindness, and utter destruction; and to the people of God confidence in him, salvation from him, and strength and protection by him, (~~<3820>~~Zechariah 12:4,5,7,8) and, at the same time that God will destroy all the enemies of his people, he will pour out his Spirit upon his chosen ones among the Jews. The consequence of which will be, their faith in Christ, signified by looking to him whom they have pierced; and their repentance towards God, expressed by mourning; and this illustrated by mourning for an only and firstborn son, (~~<3820>~~Zechariah 12:9,10) and which is further illustrated by the mourning for Josiah in the valley of Megiddon; and by an enumeration of the several families in Jerusalem, that should separately mourn on this account, (~~<3820>~~Zechariah 12:11-14).

Ver. 1. *The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel*, etc.] And against their enemies; for the good of the church of God, for its joy, comfort, and salvation; or, “concerning Israel”^{f263}; what shall befall them in the latter day, as the destruction of antichrist, prophesied of in the preceding chapter (~~<3820>~~Zechariah 11:1-17); and what is hereafter said may be believed that it shall be accomplished. The Lord is described in the greatness of his power, speaking as follows:

saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens: as a curtain, (~~<3842>~~Psalm 104:2) the expanse or firmament of heaven, which is stretched out as a canopy over all the earth around:

and layeth the foundation of the earth; firm and sure, though upon the seas and floods, yea, upon nothing, (^{<3810>}Psalm 24:2 ^{<3811>}Job 26:7):

and formeth the spirit of man within him; the soul of man, with all its powers and faculties, gifts and endowments; which is of his immediate creation, and which he continues daily to form, and infuse into the bodies of men, and holds in life there; hence he is called the Father of spirits, (^{<3810>}Hebrews 12:9).

Ver. 2. *Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about*, etc.] The Targum renders it,

“a vessel full of inebriating liquor;”

which intoxicates and makes giddy, and causes to tremble, stagger, and fall like a drunken man. The phrase denotes the punishment inflicted by the Lord upon the enemies of his church and people; (see ^{<2512>}Isaiah 51:22,23):

when they shall be in the siege both against Judah [and] against Jerusalem; not by Antiochus Epiphanes; nor by Titus Vespasian; nor by Gog and Magog, as Kimchi; but by the antichristian powers, especially the Mahometan nations, the Turks, which shall come against Jerusalem, when the Jews are returned thither, and resettled in their own land; (see ^{<3815>}Ezekiel 38:5,6). The words should be rendered, “and upon Judah shall it be”^{f264}, i.e. the cup of trembling, “in the siege against Jerusalem”; according to the Targum, and the Jewish commentators, the nations of the earth shall bring the men of Judah by force to join with them in the siege of Jerusalem; as, in the times of Antiochus, many of the Jews were drawn in to fight against their brethren; but the meaning is, that not only the wrath of God will come upon the Mahometan nations that shall besiege Jerusalem; but also on those who bear the Christian name, who are Jews outwardly, but not inwardly; and shall join with the Turks in distressing the people of the Jews upon their return to their own land: to besiege Judah, or a country, is not proper and pertinent: Jerusalem, when again in the hands of the Jews, according to this prophecy, only is to be besieged, as it will, by the Turks; and it should be observed, that it never was besieged by Antiochus, and therefore the prophecy can not be applied to his times, as it is by many.

Ver. 3. *And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people*, etc.] The Targum renders it “a stone of offence”; at which they shall stumble and fall; but it seems to design the immovableness of the state

and condition of Jerusalem, that those who attempt to remove her out of her place, or to make any alteration in her happy circumstances, will not be able to do it, (^{<931>}Psalm 125:1). Jerom makes mention of a custom in the cities of Palestine, and which continued to his times throughout all Judea, that large, huge, round stones, used to be placed in the towns and villages, which the youths exercised themselves with, by trying to lift them up as high as they could, by which they showed their strength; and the same ancient writer observes that a like custom obtained in Greece; for he says he himself saw in the tower at Athens, by the image of Minerva, a globe of brass, of at very great weight, which he, through the weakness of his body, could not move; and asking the meaning of it, he was told that the strength of wrestlers was tried by it; and no man might be admitted a combatant, until it was known, by the lifting up of that weight, with whom he should be matched; and the throwing of the “discus” was an ancient military exercise, as old as the times of Homer, who speaks^{f265} of it; and is mentioned by Latin writers, as appears from some lines of Martial^{f266}; see the Apocrypha:

“In like manner also Judas gathered together all those things that were lost by reason of the war we had, and they remain with us,” (2 Maccabees 2:14)

and this, as it tried the strength of men, so it was sometimes dangerous to themselves, or to bystanders, lest it should fall upon their heads: and as it was usual to defend themselves and oppress enemies by casting stones at them, so young men used to exercise themselves by lifting up and casting large stones; to which Virgil^{f267} sometimes refers; and it is well known that Abimelech was killed even by a woman casting a piece of a millstone upon his head, (^{<006>}Judges 9:53) and such heavy stones, and the lifting of them up, in order to cast them, may he alluded to here:

all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces; all that attempt to unsettle and remove it shall be pressed down with the weight of it, and be utterly destroyed: or, “shall be torn to pieces”^{f268}; as men’s hands are cut and torn with rough and heavy stones, The Targum is,

“all that injure her shall be consumed;”

which gives the sense of the passage:

though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it; so safe and secure will the people of God be; he being a wall of fire round about them, and the glory in the midst of them.

Ver. 4. *In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness, etc.]* The meaning is, the enemies of God's people shall be astonished at the failure of their attempts, and be filled with fury and madness because they cannot accomplish their designs; and shall be at their wits' end, not knowing what course to take: perhaps reference is had to the Turkish armies, that shall be brought against Jerusalem to recover it into their possession, which generally consist of a large cavalry; (see ^{<3816>}Revelation 9:16,17):

and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah; which phrase is sometimes used, as expressive of the wrath of God against his enemies, (^{<3104>}Amos 9:4,8) and, if the house of Judah signifies the same as Judah, joined with the nations of the earth in the siege, (^{<3817>}Zechariah 12:2), it must be so understood here; but rather it seems to be different, and to intend those who will inhabit other parts of Judea, and who will be truly the people of God, Jews not only literally, but spiritually; and so is to be interpreted in a good sense, of the divine love to them, care of them, and protection over them; (see ^{<3843>}Job 14:13) and so the Targum paraphrases it,

“and upon those of the house of Judah, I will reveal my power to do them good:”

and will smite every horse of the people with blindness: that is, every rider of them, either with blindness of mind or body, or both. It may be, as the former smiting, mentioned in the beginning of the verse, respects the mind, this may regard the body; so that they shall not see their way, and their hands shall not perform their enterprise.

Ver. 5. *And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, etc.]* The governors of the rest of the cities in Judea, besides Jerusalem, when they shall observe the armies of the people, their horses and their riders, smitten by the Lord, as above, shall take heart, and be of good courage: and secretly say within themselves,

The inhabitants of Jerusalem [shall be] my strength in the Lord of hosts their God; that is, they, in the strength of the Lord, shall overcome their enemies, and so be the means of preserving and securing the other cities of

Judah from destruction: the governors do not place their strength and confidence in the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but as they are strengthened in and by the Lord their God, from whom all strength, safety, and salvation come. In this and the following verse (³⁸¹⁶Zechariah 12:6), by “the governors of Judah” are not meant Judas Maccabeus, and his brethren, as some think; for though there are some things in the context that seem to agree with them, and they may be an emblem of the governors in the times referred to, for their courage, bravery, and success; yet the thread of history, and series of prophecy, will not admit such a sense.

Ver. 6. *In that day will I make the governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among the wood*, etc.] As a large hearth of fire, with wood all about it, devours and consumes it; so shall the governors of Judah be to the nations that shall come up against Jerusalem. The Targum renders it,

“as a garment of fire among wood:”

and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; of wheat, which presently destroys it; (see Obidiah 1:18):

and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left; on the south and on the north, as the Targum interprets it. The phrase denotes the utter destruction of the people on all sides:

and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, [even] in Jerusalem; upon that very spot of ground which was formerly called Jerusalem shall the city be built again, and inhabited; and shall continue, notwithstanding the attempts of all the nations of the earth to destroy it; (see ²⁴¹⁸Jeremiah 30:18).

Ver. 7. *The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first*, etc.] That is, the Jews, who will be in other parts of the land encamped in tents, to defend themselves against their enemies; these will be saved out of the hands of them, before the inhabitants of Jerusalem will be saved; and in such a manner, that it will evidently appear that their salvation is of the Lord: and his end in so doing will be,

that the glory of the house of David, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, do not magnify [themselves] against Judah; lest the chief of the family of David, and the principal inhabitants of Jerusalem, should glory over their brethren in other parts of Judea; and say it was owing to them that they were saved and delivered out of the hands of their enemies.

Ver. 8. *In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem,* etc.] As with a shield against their enemies; and such is the Lord to all his people; he is their shield to protect them; he keeps and guards them by his power; he encompasses them about with his favour, as with a shield; and gives unto them the shield of salvation; all which will eminently appear to be the case of the Jews at this time:

and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; they that have the most fearful hearts, and feeble minds, shall be as courageous, as valiant, and as victorious as David; and they that are the weakest, in a spiritual sense, in the grace and in the doctrine of faith, and in that part of it, respecting the use of things indifferent, who are ready to be “offended, stumble, and fall”^{f269}; for the spiritual reign, which will at this time take place, will not be a state of perfection; even those will be like David, beloved of the Lord, kings as well as priests unto God, and as strong in faith as he:

and the house of David [shall be] as God; the stronger sort of believers among them, such as are strong in the Lord, in the grace of faith, and in the doctrines of the Gospel; they shall have much of God with them, great grace upon them, and be like unto him in goodness, truth, and holiness: or they shall be like “Elohim”, the angels, as this word is rendered, (^{<3985>}Psalm 8:5) for knowledge, purity, and readiness to do the will of God; and it follows:

as the Angel of the Lord before them; that is, as Christ, who is the Angel of the covenant, and of the divine Presence; and in whom the name of the Lord is; who is at the head of his people, and goes before them, as their Leader and Commander, and the Captain of salvation, (^{<3923>}Micah 2:13) whose image they bear, and into which they are changed from glory to glory by the spirit of God; and which will now be very clearly discerned upon the saints in the latter day glory. Kimchi and Ben Melech, by “the house of David”, understand the King Messiah^{f270}, who was to be of the seed of David; and so does Cocceius, who takes the “as” to be a note, not of similitude, but of truth, he being truly God, and the Angel of Jehovah. The Targum is,

“the house of David shall be like great men or princes that shall prosper, as the Angel of God before them.”

Ver. 9. *And it shall come to pass in that day,* etc.] So often mentioned in this chapter; by which is meant the latter part of the Gospel dispensation, the spiritual reign of Christ:

[that] I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem; and shall destroy them. The whole of this paragraph seems to refer to the same as in (²³⁰¹Ezekiel 38:1-39:29).

Ver. 10. *And I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem,* etc.] The Jews that belong to the family of Christ, and to the heavenly Jerusalem, the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven:

the Spirit of grace and of supplications; by which is meant the Holy Spirit of God, who is called the “Spirit of grace”; not merely because he is good and gracious, and loving to his people, and is of grace given unto them; but because he is the author of all grace in them; of gracious convictions, and spiritual illuminations; of quickening, regenerating, converting, and sanctifying grace; and of all particular graces, as faith, hope, love, fear, repentance, humility, joy, peace, meekness, patience, longsuffering, self-denial, etc.; as well as because he is the revealer, applier, and witnesser of all the blessings of grace unto them: and he is called the “Spirit of supplications”; because he indites the prayers of his people, shows them their wants, and stirs them up to pray; enlarges their hearts, supplies them with arguments, and puts words into their mouths; gives faith, fervency, and freedom, and encourages to come to God as their Father, and makes intercession for them, according to the will of God: pouring it upon them denotes the abundance and freeness of his grace; (see ^{2340B}Isaiah 44:3):

and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced; by nailing him to the tree at his crucifixion; and especially by piercing his side with a spear; which, though not personally done by them, yet by their ancestors, at least through their instigation and request; and besides, as he was pierced and wounded for their sins, so by them: and now, being enlightened and convicted by the Spirit of God, they shall look to him by faith for the pardon of their sins, through his blood; for the justification of their persons by his righteousness; and for eternal life and salvation through him. We Christians can have no doubt upon us that this passage belongs to Christ, when it is observed, upon one of the soldiers piercing the side of Jesus with a spear, it is said, “these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled; they shall look on him whom they have pierced”; and it seems also

to be referred to in (~~6007~~ Revelation 1:7) yea, the Jews themselves, some of them, acknowledge it is to be understood of the Messiah. In the Talmud^{f271}, mention being made of the mourning after spoken of, it is asked, what this mourning was made for? and it is replied, R. Dusa and the Rabbins are divided about it: one says, for Messiah ben Joseph, who shall be slain; and another says, for the evil imagination, that shall be slain; it must be granted to him that says, for Messiah the son of Joseph that shall be slain; as it is written, “and they shall look upon whom they have pierced, and mourn”, etc. for, for the other, why should they mourn? hence Jarchi and Kimchi on the place say, our Rabbins interpret this of Messiah the son of Joseph, who shall be slain; and the note of Aben Ezra is, all the nations shall look unto me, to see what I will do to those who have pierced Messiah the son of Joseph. Grotius observes, that Hadarsan on (~~0280~~ Genesis 28:10-16) understands it of Messiah the son of David. The Jews observing some prophecies speaking of the Messiah in a state of humiliation, and others of him in an exalted state, have coined this notion of two Messiahs, which are easily reconciled without it. The Messiah here prophesied of appears to be both God and man; a divine Person called Jehovah, who is all along speaking in the context, and in the text itself; for none else could pour out the spirit of grace and supplication; and yet he must be man, to be pierced; and the same is spoken of, that would do the one, and suffer the other; and therefore must be the $\psi\epsilon\alpha\nu\psi\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$, or God-man in one person. As to what a Jewish writer^{f272} objects, that this was spoken of one that was pierced in war, as appears from the context; and that if the same person that is pierced is to be looked to, then it would have been said, “and mourn for me, and be in bitterness for me”; it may be replied, that this prophecy does not speak of the piercing this person at the time when the above wars shall be; but of the Jews mourning for him at the time of their conversion, who had been pierced by them, that is, by their ancestors, hundreds of years ago; which now they will with contrition remember, they having assented to it, and commended it as a right action; and as for the change from the first person to the third, this is not at all unusual in Scripture:

and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for [his] only [son]; or, “for this”^{f273}; that is, piercing him; for sin committed against him; because of their rejection of him, their hardness of heart, and unbelief with respect to him; and on account of their many sins, which were the occasion of his being pierced; which mourning will arise from, and be increased by, a

spiritual sight of him, a sense of his love to them, and a view of benefits by him. Evangelical repentance springs from faith, and is accompanied with it; and this godly sorrow is like that which is expressed for an only son; (see ^{<1080>}Amos 8:10 ^{<1072>}Luke 7:12) and indeed Christ is the only begotten of the Father, as well as the firstborn among many brethren, as follows:

and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for [his] firstborn; sin is a bitter thing, and makes work for bitter repentance.

Ver. 11. *In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem*, etc.] Great numbers being awakened, convinced, and converted, and brought to true repentance:

as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. Lightfoot^{f274} thinks the prophet alludes to the two great and general lamentations of Israel; the one about the rock Rimmon, where a whole tribe was come to four hundred (it should be six hundred) men, (^{<1074>}Judges 20:47) and may be rendered, “the sad shout of Rimmon”; and the other in the valley of Megiddo, for the death of Josiah. Some take Hadadrimmon to be the name of a man, as Aben Ezra; and the Targum and Jarchi say who he was, and also make two mournings to be alluded to^{f275}; paraphrasing the words thus,

“at that time mourning shall be multiplied in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Ahab the son of Omri, whom Hadadrimmon the son of Tabrimmon slew in Ramothgilead; and as the mourning of Josiah, the son of Amon, whom Pharaohnecho, or the lame, slew in the valley of Megiddo:”

and so the Syriac version renders it,

“as the mourning of the son of Amon in the valley of Megiddo.”

Of the first of these, (see ^{<1028>}1 Kings 22:31-37) and of the latter, (^{<1029>}2 Kings 23:29) according to Jerom, it was the name of a place in the valley of Megiddo, near to Jezreel; and which, in his time, went by the name of Maximianopolis, called so in honour of the Emperor Maximian; it was seventeen miles from Caesarea in Palestine, and ten miles from Jezreel^{f276}; and mention is made by Jewish^{f277} writers of the valley of Rimmon, in which place the elders intercalated the year; though Jerom elsewhere^{f278} says, that Adadrimon was a king, the son of Tabrimmon, who reigned at Carchemish, whom Pharaohnecho slew at the same time he slew Josiah.

Both words, Hadad, or Adad, and Rimmon, are names of idols with the Syrians.

Ver. 12. *And the land shall mourn*, etc.] That is, the inhabitants of it; not only Jerusalem, but the land of Judea, and the people in it everywhere: in the Talmud^{f279} it is said, this is the mourning of the Messiah, that is, on his account:

every family apart; though the mourning will be general and public, yet it will be not in a body of the whole people together, but separate and distinct:

the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the men by themselves, and the women by themselves, which is according to the custom of the Jews in public worship; those that belong to the family of David shall mourn because of the Jews' long rejection of the King Messiah, Jesus the son of David, the Saviour, whom God raised up of his seed:

the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; not of Nathan the son of David, the brother of Solomon, as some think; for, as Aben Ezra observes, he and his family are comprehended in the family of David; but of Nathan the prophet, who will mourn because the Jews have so much slighted Jesus the great Prophet, the Lord raised up in Israel, his doctrines and ordinances.

Ver. 13. *The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart*, etc.] Because of the contempt of the priestly office of Christ, which theirs prefigured, and was abolished by him; because of their trampling upon his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice:

the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; not of Shimea the son of David, (^{<33B5>}1 Chronicles 3:5) as Jarchi thinks, for his family is comprehended in the family of David; nor of Shimei the son of Merari, and grandson of Levi, (^{<33B6>}1 Chronicles 6:16,17), for the same reason: some think that, by way of prophecy, the family of Semei, mentioned among the progenitors of Christ, (^{<43B5>}Luke 3:26), is intended; and others have thought of Shammai, a famous Misnic doctor in the times of Christ, whose disciples were called the house or family of Shammai, of which frequent mention is made in the Misna and Talmud: but the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, read "the family of Simeon"; mentioned together with Levi, as brethren in iniquity, and now mourn for the common concern they had in the crucifixion of Christ, and their refusal of him.

Ver. 14. *All the families that remain*, etc.] That will be in being in those times;

every family apart, and their wives apart; for the whole nation shall be born at once, and converted, and all Israel shall be saved, (²⁴⁶⁸Isaiah 66:8
⁵¹²⁶Romans 11:26).