

Lesson 20

Chapter 13

Before we look at Chapter 13, let's go back to Acts 2, which helped us understand verse 10 of the previous chapter. Acts 2 told us when the pouring out of the spirit in verse 10 was fulfilled, and Acts 2:36-37 gave us an example of the mourning that was also described in verse 10.

***Acts 2:36-37** — Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

What happens next? Peter was asked that question at the end of Acts 2:37, and we know how he responded.

***Acts 2:38** — Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

How does Zechariah answer that same question? What happens next?

***1** In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.*

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

Is that the fountain we see here? A fountain filled with blood? Or do we see a fountain filled with something else?

Let's forget the lyrics of that song for a moment and ask this question: with what do we expect a fountain to be filled?

***Jeremiah 2:13** — For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.*

Jeremiah answers our question, but we didn't need Jeremiah to tell us what we already knew — fountains are filled with *water*. And this fountain in verse 1 is no different.

I'm not criticizing that song. It is simply using poetic language to correctly link the waters of baptism with the blood of Christ — but fountains are filled with *water*, not with blood. When we see a fountain, we should think *water*, not blood.

So what then is verse 1 telling us?

First, what is the time frame? The verse refers to something that would occur “in that day.” That's the same time period that we saw in Chapter 12 — the first century.

Second, in that day — in the first century — a fountain would be opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. What is that fountain?

Well, what was provided in the first century that involved water and was for sin and for uncleanness? Didn't Peter answer that question in the verse we just read?

***Acts 2:38** — Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be **baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

Zechariah 13:1 **links water and sins** in the first century. Acts 2:38 **links water and sins** in the first century. Each verse follows mourning over the death of the Good Shepherd. Perhaps this book of Zechariah is not as difficult as some commentaries make it out to be — because that seems pretty straightforward to me! **Zechariah 13:1 is an Old Testament depiction of baptism for the remission of sins!**

But verse 1 says that this fountain would be opened “to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Does that mean that baptism is for those already in spiritual Israel? I thought that baptism was how one became part of spiritual Israel in the first place. The answer is that both views are correct.

First, baptism is how one becomes a part of spiritual Israel, the church. How do we know that? This verse right here in Zechariah tells us that — this fountain is for sin and uncleanness. No one can enter the church until they are made clean, and that cleansing occurs at baptism.

***Ephesians 5:26-27** — That he might sanctify and cleanse it with **the washing of water** by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, **not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing**; but that it should be holy and **without blemish**.*

But the efficacy of baptism does not end there. Baptism continues to cleanse those who remain faithful to God. How do we know that? John tells us that the blood of Christ continues to cleanse us from sin.

***1 John 1:7** — But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

And Paul tells us how we come in contact with that blood.

***Romans 6:3-6** — Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were **baptized into his death**? Therefore we are **buried with him by baptism into death**: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been **planted together in the likeness of his death**, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that **our old man is crucified with him**, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

Baptism is how we enter the kingdom, and that same baptism is how faithful children of God remain in the kingdom. Baptism makes us clean, and that same baptism keeps us clean.

That baptism is the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5. That one baptism is water baptism (Acts 8:38). And it is water that fills this fountain here in Zechariah 13:1. There is no other water in the first century or in this current century that is for sin and uncleanness.

Acts 22:16 — *And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

Can we find the gospel plan in the Old Testament? Yes! We have seen it right here! We saw faith when we saw those who looked unto the pierced one. We saw repentance when those same people mourned over their sin and over what it had caused. And we just saw baptism in this fountain for sin and uncleanness.

The links between Zechariah and Acts 2 are amazing! In Chapters 12 and 13 we have seen the outpouring of God's spirit, we have seen those who look at the one they pierced and finally understand what they have done, we have seen those same people mourn over their sin and ask what they must do, and we have seen the answer: wash in the fountain for sin and uncleanness.

What else would happen in that day?

2 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.

Verse 2 has the same time frame as verse 1 — “in that day,” which is the first century. Verse 2 tells us that three things would happen in that day. First, idols would be cut off out of the land. Second, prophets would pass out of the land, and third, unclean spirits would pass out of the land.

What does it mean that the names of the idols would be cut off out of the land? We could view that statement broadly as just a general statement about idolatry (as most commentaries do) or we could view that statement more narrowly.

I think the narrow approach is better. Why? Because there is a link between this verse in 13:2 and a verse studied earlier in 11:17 — “Woe to the **idol** shepherd that leaveth the flock!” That verse in Chapter 11 used a Hebrew word for “worthless” that was usually reserved for idols and false gods, but that verse used the word to describe one or more of the first century Roman emperors. I think the second verse here in Chapter 13 is describing the same thing.

Those Roman emperors, and especially Domitian, thought they were gods and demanded worship as gods. Every emperor called himself “divus” or “sebastos,” which means divine. On his coins, Nero referred to himself as “The Savior of the World.” The emperors took as their title the Latin word “dominus,” or its Greek equivalent “kurios,” which means Lord, and which is used in the Bible as a title for Jesus.

But, of course, those emperors were not gods. Instead, they were false and worthless idols. Domitian was assassinated in AD 96. He was cut off out of the land. His name was not remembered, meaning that he was not remembered as a god, which is how he had

wanted to be remembered. It also means that his name was not honored after his death, which history confirms. Upon Domitian's death, the Roman Senate was:

“Overjoyed ... and assailed the dead emperor with the most insulting and stinging kind of outcries ... Finally they passed a decree that his inscriptions should everywhere be erased, and all record of him obliterated.”

And who did this? Who cut them off? Verse 2 answers that question — God cut them off. Here is how Paul described that same first century event.

2 Thessalonians 2:8-9 — *And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,*

But was that cutting off an *idol*? Read what Paul wrote a few verses earlier.

2 Thessalonians 2:4 — *Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

That is what the first half of verse 2 is describing.

What about the rest of verse 2? What does it mean that prophets and the unclean spirits would pass out of the land? I think that means just what it says. During the first century time period, the office of prophet would cease, and the ability of unclean spirits to invade and possess people would come to an end.

1 Corinthians 13:8 also tells us that prophecies would come to an end, and it tells us *when* that would happen — when that which is perfect is come (verse 10). I think that which is perfect there is the perfect word of God, which we know was completed in the first century.

And doesn't that make sense? What would a prophet tell us today? That Jesus is coming? He has already appeared the first time, and we already know he will appear a second time, so why would we need a prophet when we have the Bible to tell us these things? The office of prophet came to an end in the first century, and that is something this verse in Zechariah is telling us.

What about the unclean spirits? They would also pass out of the land in the first century. There is no demon possession today, and there hasn't been since the first century.

And, again, doesn't that make sense? Although there is much we don't know about the subject of demon possession, in the first century it seems to have been part of God's plan to confirm the word through signs and wonders.

Mark 1:27 — *And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.*

Mark 16:20 — *And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.*

Matthew 12:28 — *But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.*

Today, we have the complete word of God. We don't need a continuing demonstration of signs and the miracles to confirm it. And we have the sign of the resurrection — if men fail to believe that, what other sign or miracle would convince them otherwise? Isn't that what Jesus said?

Matthew 12:39-40 — *An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

Demon possession went away in the first century time period, and that is what verse 2 is telling us would happen.

But *why* is verse 2 telling us these things? Because of what we saw in verse 1 and in the preceding chapter. Because the promises have been fulfilled in Christ and in his church. Because God loves and provides for his faithful remnant. Because the eternal kingdom of Christ has the perfect word of God.

And those false gods that sought to destroy the church? They are cut off. And prophets? We have no need for them. And unclean spirits? They are cut off and will no longer afflict the people of God.

So what if someone today were to tell us that they were a prophet sent by God? How should we handle that situation? Verse 3 answers that question.

3 And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.

Verse 3 is the logical conclusion of verse 2. If prophets have ceased in the land, then logically it follows that if anyone tells you they are a prophet, they must be a false prophet.

Verse 3 makes that point in a very graphic manner. If someone tells his parents that he is a prophet, then they will know he is lying, and they will thrust him through and kill him. Although that all sounds very harsh to our ears, this verse is simply restating what the Old Law had said about false prophets.

Deuteronomy 18:20 — *But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.*

And the reference to one's own parents reminds us of a similar passage from the Old Law.

Deuteronomy 13:6-9 — *If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; Namely, of the gods of the people which*

*are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: But thou shalt surely kill him; **thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death**, and afterwards the hand of all the people.*

So what is the point being made here for the New Covenant? Are we to kill false prophets? No, and we know from the rest of the Old Testament that few false prophets met that fate even under the Old Law.

The point being made here for the New Covenant is the same point that was being made under the Old Covenant, and it is the same point that Jesus made in Luke 14.

Luke 14:26 — *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*

And it is the same point that Jesus made in Matthew 6.

Matthew 6:33 — *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

The kingdom of God must come first. If someone is harming that kingdom, then we must expose and correct that person — **no matter who it is**. If even the parents of a false prophet are to have this attitude, what does that say about our attitude? If a man's own parents reject his false prophecies, then what does that say about how we should respond to them?

The Bible says that the kingdom must come before everything else — even our own families.

But having that attitude will cause conflict in the home! That attitude will divide up our family! You mean like this?

Luke 12:53 — *The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.*

Did Jesus say, seek ye *second* the kingdom of God? Seek ye *third*? No. We either put the kingdom of God *first* in our lives, or we reject it entirely. Those are the only two options.

4 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: 5 But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.

These verses look at some false prophets (certainly not all false prophets) who recognize their error and are ashamed because of it. The point here is that the understanding that prophecy had ceased would be so widespread that people would be ashamed to ever

make a pretense of being a prophet. That is certainly the case in the Lord's church, although that cannot be said for many religious organizations. We see people on the TV every day who have no shame at all in calling themselves a prophet!

Elijah had been "a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins." (2 Kings 1:8) Apparently Elijah's dress had by Zechariah's day become a costume worn by pretenders who wanted others to see them as prophets. That is the deceit we see in verse 4, and deceit such as that would also come to an end once everyone understood that prophecy had ceased. Once everyone knows that prophecy has ended, it becomes very hard to convince people that you are a prophet!

Verse 5 gives another illustration of this dramatic change. Those false prophets who saw the error of their way would readily admit to not being a prophet. Instead, they would admit that they were instead just a farmer or one who cares for cattle. They would be exposed for what they really were.

Verse 5, by the way, confirms our understanding that these two verses are not saying that *all* false prophets will repent. Instead, these verses are saying that *some* will repent. How do we know that? Because the example in verse 5 could not apply to all false prophets. They were not all husbandmen or keepers of cattle from their youth.

Verses 4 and 5 are intended simply to make the point that everyone in the remnant will know that prophecy has ceased, and so they will not be easy prey for false prophets and other pretenders. And if a false prophet rises up in their own midst, they will deal with him appropriately.

6 And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

To whom is verse 6 addressed? We really have only two choices — either verse 6 is addressed to the Messiah, or verse 6 is addressed to the false prophet described in verses 3-5.

If it is the latter, then verse 6 is pointing back to verse 3, and the wounds in the false prophet's hands are the wounds inflicted on him by his parents for his false prophecies — that is, wounds inflicted by his family members (his friends).

Or perhaps those wounds are ritualistic wounds inflicted on him by his fellow false prophets (his friends), such as those inflicted by the Baal worshippers in 1 Kings 18:28 — "And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them."

Or perhaps the answer in verse 6 is a lie — the people see evidence of the ritualistic wounds that characterized false prophets, and the false prophet falsely responds that he got those wounds in a brawl with his friends.

If verse 6 is addressed to the false prophets, then verse 6 is just a continuation of the same thoughts we saw in verses 3-5 — namely, that false prophets will be recognized as such by all.

The alternate view (a view that is much less popular among commentators) is that verse 6 is describing the Messiah, and, in particular, is describing the wounds he suffered on the cross.

A big criticism of this view is that it requires the pronoun “him” in verse 6 to point all the way back to the one who was pierced in 12:10. But Zechariah has frequently bounced back and forth from some topic to the Messiah, and so we could be just seeing another example of that here. And this bounce need not be all the way back to 12:10 — Zechariah was describing the work of the Messiah just a few verses earlier in verse 1 of Chapter 13.

It’s true that no New Testament writer ever points back to this verse in reference to Christ, but the very next verse is a Messianic prophecy, and so we cannot argue against a Messianic reading of verse 6 based solely on context. The real question is whether verse 6 belongs with verses 3-5 or instead belongs with verse 7.

And as for being wounded in the house of his friends, one commentator argued that Jesus was not wounded by his friends. But that is not what the text says — it says that this person was wounded *in the house of* his friends. That house could be the house of Judah. Or the verse could be referring to Psalm 41:9, which is quoted in John 13:18.

John 13:18 — *I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.*

Which is the better view? It’s a close call, and either view could be correct, but I lean toward verse 6 being Messianic. Modern commentaries are *very* confident in their opinion that verse 6 is *not* Messianic, and perhaps they are correct. But I think they may have been much too quick to dismiss the possibility that verse 6 is a Messianic prophecy. I would likely lean the other direction on this question if it weren’t for verse 7, which we know is Messianic and which the New Testament links to Christ’s friends, which makes it very similar to what we see here in verse 6.

7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

Notice how the Good Shepherd is described in the opening phrase of verse 7 — the Lord of hosts describes him as “my fellow.” The Hebrew word translated “fellow” refers to someone united to another by the possession of common nature, common rights, and common privileges. That reminds us of Hebrews 1:8.

Hebrews 1:8 — *But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.*

And it reminds us of what Paul wrote in Philippians 2.

Philippians 2:6 — *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.*

That is what it means when God the Father refers to God the Son as “my fellow.”

Verse 7 confirms that we are correct in understanding the time frame of these verses to be in the first century. How? Because Jesus himself told us that verse 7 was fulfilled in the first century.

Mark 14:27-30 — *And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.*

Peter then declared that he would not be offended even if everyone else was, but Jesus told Peter that he would soon deny him. That New Testament linkage of verse 7 to Jesus' denial by a friend adds some weight to the view that verse 6 is also Messianic.

The inspired explanation of verse 7 found in Mark 14 adds an important pronoun. Verse 7 says, "smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered," which leaves open the question of who does the smiting. Mark 14 answers that question — "**I will smite the shepherd**, and the sheep shall be scattered." The speaker in verse 7 is the Lord of hosts, and so God is the one who smites the shepherd.

What does that mean? What it means is that the sword that awakes in the first part of verse 7 is then used by God the Father to smite the Messiah. This is what Jesus was referring to in his statement to Pilate.

John 19:11 — *Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.*

It was God's will that Jesus die on the cross. Why? Because it was through that perfect sacrifice that God fulfilled his promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 that in his seed all the earth would be blessed.

So much deep and wonderful theology is laid open for us in this short verse! What we see here is that God the Father awakens his sword to smite the shepherd who is his fellow, which means the shepherd who is also God. We could discuss those concepts for weeks and still not even begin to plumb their depths!

And what happened after this great smiting of the Good Shepherd? What happened was that the sheep scattered, including Peter! The Good Shepherd was left to face his accusers standing alone.

"He could have called ten thousand angels, to destroy the world and set Him free. He could have called ten thousand angels, but He died alone for you and me."

But even though he was deserted in his time of need, verse 7 ends with a comforting promise: "I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." These little ones are the poor of the flock we saw earlier. They are the remnant.

John 10:11 — *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

Luke 12:32 — *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

The sheep scattered, but both God the Father and God the Son remembered the little ones. He would gather them again with his hand. It was for those little ones that the first part of verse 7 was taking place. It was for their sake that God the Father smote God the Son.

8 And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. 9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

Verses 8 and 9 provide more detail on the scattering of the sheep that we saw in verse 7. While that scattering included the desertion by the apostles, it included much more as well as these two verses explain.

First, these scattered sheep included both the faithful sheep (the third part brought through the fire) and the unfaithful sheep (the two parts that shall be cut off and die). The identity of these two groups of sheep has already been explained to us. The unfaithful sheep are those who rejected their Messiah and clamored for his crucifixion. They were cut off because of that rejection, and they died in the judgement of AD 70 that was caused by that rejection.

And the sheep brought through the fire? They are the faithful remnant who were scattered but then gathered up again by God. They call on God's name, and God hears them. God says to them, "It is my people." And they say, "The LORD is my God." Verse 9 paints a beautiful picture, and it is one that we have seen before.

But what is meant by this phrase: "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried"?

That phrase is a promise of great tribulation, but it is also a promise of great deliverance. Remember our time frame — we are still looking at events of the first century. What great tribulation faced the faithful people of God in the first century? We have two possibilities.

The greatest and most dangerous threat to God's people at this time was their great persecution by the Roman empire, the most powerful nation on earth. What hope did they have in coming through that fire? How could they ever do so? The very end of verse 9 answers that question — they came through that fire because of God's loving care for them and because of their faith in God. "I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God."

Another possibility here is that it is describing the deliverance that occurred when Jesus opened a way of escape for his faithful people to flee Jerusalem before its destruction. Those who heeded Jesus' warnings in Matthew 24 were able to see the signs and escape the city in time.

Either of these views or both of these views could be correct. I lean toward saying that *both* deliverances are in view here. Why? Because we will see both of these deliverances described in Chapter 14.

QUESTIONS ABOUT CHAPTER 13?