

ZECHARIAH

Chapter Twelve

Introduction

If you are a Christian, sooner or later someone is going to try to convince you that you will have to go through all or at least part of the seven-year Great Tribulation that is coming upon the earth.

Let me give you two Scriptures you can show these people to politely (or impolitely) tell them they are wrong:

Jeremiah 30:7 Alas! For that day *is* great, so that none *is* like it; and it *is* the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.

Daniel 12:1 At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands *watch* over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, *even* to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered...

These verses confirm that there is indeed a "day" of "great" "trouble" coming upon the earth, "such as never was" before. But they tell you something more: This Great Tribulation is "the time of **Jacob's** trouble," when **Daniel's people** "shall be delivered." The Hebrew patriarch Jacob and his descendants, the Jews, are who the Great Tribulation is intended for.

Another passage in the Book of Daniel confirms this. In Daniel 9:24, Daniel was told, "seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city..." The seven-year Great Tribulation period is one of those "seventy weeks; in fact, it is the last of them. Notice again who the seventy weeks, and who the final seven-year Great Tribulation, is for: Daniel was told it is for "thy people," Daniel's people - the **Jews** - and *their* city - **Jerusalem**.

The Great Tribulation has *nothing* to do with Christians in the Church Age in which we live. It has *everything* to do with God's covenant with Israel.

Israel refused and rejected her Messiah when Jesus offered them the kingdom of heaven on earth in His first coming. The Jews did not

recognize Him as their Savior and Lord. They shouted, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!," and they handed Jesus over to the Romans to be put to death.

From that day until today, the nation of Israel still does not recognize Jesus as their Savior and Lord. The seven-year Great Tribulation is the period of time during which God prepares the Jews to recognize Jesus when He returns in His Second Coming to earth.

The future recognition of Jesus as Savior and Lord by the Jews is the heart of our text:

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

Jesus **is** the One "whom they pierced" when He was crucified. He *will* return to Jerusalem and He *will* be recognized by the Jews.

In light of these amazing truths, Zechariah Twelve offers some sound advice to the Jews who are alive during the Great Tribulation: #1 Look Up For Jesus And Run To Safety, and #2 Look Upon Jesus And Mourn For Sin.

#1 Look Up For Jesus
And Run To Safety
(v1-9)

I have one word for anyone who truly believes that they are going to go through the Great Tribulation: ***Run!***

Actually, it is the advice Jesus gave the Jews who would find themselves in the midst of that awful period of time. He said,

Matthew 24:16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Matthew 24:17 Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.

Matthew 24:18 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

Matthew 24:19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

Matthew 24:20 And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

Matthew 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus added another good word of advice:

Luke 21:28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.

“Look up for Jesus and run for safety” is the strategy for those who find themselves in the Great Tribulation.

Our text focuses on the final days of the Great Tribulation. In this first section you see three things: A *covenant* with Israel, a *campaign* against Israel, and a *Captain* over Israel.

You see a covenant with Israel in verse one:

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

God is the Creator of heaven and earth and mankind. Further, He is the One Who constantly sustains heaven, earth, and mankind. God didn't just “stretch out the heavens, lay the foundation of the earth, and form the spirit of man.” He “stretches... lays... and forms.” The tense of the words tells you that these are constant, on-going activities.

Within the universe God created and sustains, He established a unique nation – “Israel.” The physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are God's special concern. Much of human history revolves around, or at least involves, God's dealings with the Jews. The future Great Tribulation is an important part of the covenant God has made with Israel because, through the time of Jacob's Trouble, God will turn the hearts of the Jews towards Himself so He can fulfill His promises to be their King on earth in a glorious kingdom age.

You see a campaign in verses two and three:

Zechariah 12:2 “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem.

Zechariah 12:3 And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.”

This is what we commonly call the Battle of Armageddon. It is actually a long campaign of the world's armies against one another and against Israel and Jerusalem that will culminate in the Valley of

Megiddo. “All the nations of the earth” will be “gathered against” the Jews and will “lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem.”

While these verses are set in the future, we often correctly quote them in the present to blow people’s minds about the on-going conflicts in the Middle East. Jerusalem and Israel occupy center stage in world events. Most of the world is already politically “gathered against them.” Jerusalem is indeed a heavy burden.

You see a Captain in verses four through nine:

Zechariah 12:4 In that day,” says the LORD, “I will strike every horse with confusion, and its rider with madness; I will open My eyes on the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.

Facing certain defeat and annihilation, the Lord Himself will intervene on Israel’s behalf. He will come to earth as their Captain and confuse the horses of their enemies.

Horses? It could be figurative, with horses representing the implements and engines of war. But it might be literal! The Great Tribulation will be a time of devastation and destruction upon the planet. It could be that the armies of the world must revert back to more primitive warfare.

Zechariah 12:5 And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, ‘The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in the LORD of hosts, their God.’
Zechariah 12:6 In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place—Jerusalem.
Zechariah 12:7 “The LORD will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall not become greater than that of Judah.

The “tents of Judah” is a reference to the defenseless outlying areas around Jerusalem. God will save these first in order to show the Jews that He is fighting for them as their Captain. In other words, they will not be able to credit their own strength or cunning or resolve. It will be obvious that God Himself is fighting for them.

The “governors,” or leaders, in these outlying areas of Judah will be like fire devouring kindling as God empowers them. As a result, the “inhabitants of Jerusalem” will know that their Captain is the “Lord of hosts.”

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

David was a renowned warrior. All the Jews will be like David, empowered by God against their enemies, with the “Angel of the Lord” – their Captain – “before them.”

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

You can read about the destruction of the nations in Revelation nineteen. Because of His *covenant* with Israel, God will Himself return to earth as their *Captain* and destroy the nations and their armies at the height of their military *campaign* in the Middle East.

Leading up to this great deliverance, the Jews should **look up** for their Captain to come and **run for safety**. We’ll see in chapter thirteen that fully two-thirds of the Jews will be killed and only one-third will survive the Great Tribulation. The Jews who survive are the subject of verses ten through fourteen.

Before we look at them, I’d like to apply what we’ve learned to ourselves as believers in the Church Age. As I said, we have no relationship to the Great Tribulation. It is the time of Jacob’s Trouble – meaning the descendants of Jacob through his sons who were the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Church will be removed from the earth in the Rapture prior to any portion of the Great Tribulation on earth.

Even in the Church Age it’s good advice to “Look up for Jesus and run for safety.” *You* are to “look up” in the sense of anticipating His return to rapture you at any moment. *You* are to “run for safety” in the sense of fleeing from sin.

Two verses in the Book of Titus put this into perspective:

Titus 2:12 ...denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,
Titus 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

Look up – Jesus is coming! Run for safety – flee from sin and the entanglements of this present evil world.

The remaining verses of Zechariah Twelve tell you what happens to the one-third of the Jews who survive the Great Tribulation. They,

#2 Look Upon Jesus
And Mourn For Sin
(v10-14)

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

God – Jehovah – is speaking to His people. He says, “they will look upon **Me whom they pierced.**” “Pierced” means *to strike through and wound*. How could the Almighty God – Jehovah – be struck through and pierced? Only if He came in human flesh... Which He did when He came to earth the first time, Jesus Christ.

This Scripture is quoted by John in his Gospel as referring to Jesus (John 19:37). If there was any doubt that this Person is Jesus, it is cleared-up for us in Revelation 1:7, where you read concerning the Risen Lord,

Revelation 1:7 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him...

The Jews who survive the Great Tribulation will look upon Jesus and recognize Him as the One that their ancestors sent to His crucifixion. They will understand He *was* and *is* their Savior and Lord.

Their recognition leads to repentance and redemption. The key word in these verses is “mourn,” used five times in one form or another. Simply put, the Jews will be converted and believe on Jesus Christ for salvation.

Their mourning is given a comparison in verse eleven:

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

The mourning referred to is from an incident recorded in Second Kings chapter twenty-three and Second Chronicles chapter thirty-five. The Pharaoh of Egypt killed the godly king Josiah. This incident is chosen for two reasons: It was a time of great national mourning, and it occurred on the same site as the future Battle of Armageddon – “in the plain of Megiddo.”

Zechariah 12:12 And the land shall mourn, every family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves;

Zechariah 12:13 the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of Shimei by itself, and their wives by themselves;

Zechariah 12:14 all the families that remain, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves.

David... Nathan... Levi... Shimei... We can't be absolutely certain why these four names are highlighted. It might be that they summarize the three offices of leadership in Israel: The kings (David), the prophets (Nathan), and the priests (Levi and Shimei, representing two classes of priests). The leaders, then “all the families” of Israel are mentioned as mourning.

The recurring phrase “and their wives by themselves” indicates the individuality of the mourning. Everyone, from whatever walk of life, and both genders, will mourn individually for their sin. They will “look upon Jesus Whom they pierced” and get alone with God to confess their sin. It is the strongest way that the text could describe to you how true their repentance and conversion will be.

The text ends, but I don't want to leave you hanging. After Jesus returns, He establishes His kingdom on the earth. It will last for one thousand years. These Jews, the one-third who survive the Great Tribulation, will be on the earth. So will many Gentiles who survive. They will remain in their human bodies and repopulate the earth.

Is there any application of this for us – the believers in the Church Age? Sure: We, too, should “look upon Jesus and mourn for sin.”

Jesus was pierced; He was crucified, for the sins of the whole world. Just as the Jews were described as participating in His piercing by virtue of their unbelief, so too does every human being take responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus. He died on the Cross at Calvary for **your** sins.

Sin is heinous; it is the reason Jesus had to die. If you are saved, then you ought to have a sensitivity to sin. You ought to despise and hate it, and especially in your own life. The world and the devil are out to **de**-sensitize you to sin and to thereby tempt you to indulge in it. You and I need to remain sensitive, and get more sensitive, as we grow in the Lord. We should mourn for sin.

Conclusion

Don't allow yourself to be drawn off by those who want to tell you that you are going to have to go through all or part of the Great Tribulation.

Instead, concentrate on the two things you've learned: Look up, and look upon, Jesus, and by doing so you will both flee from sin and grow more sensitive to sin as you wait for the blessed hope of the "glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."