

ZECHARIAH

Chapter 12

Jerusalem's Enemies to Be Destroyed

An Oracle

This is the word of the LORD concerning Israel. The LORD, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the spirit of man within him, declares: ²“I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. ³ On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves. ⁴ On that day I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness,” declares the LORD. “I will keep a watchful eye over the house of Judah, but I will blind all the horses of the nations. ⁵ Then the leaders of Judah will say in their hearts, ‘The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the LORD Almighty is their God.’ ⁶ “On that day I will make the leaders of Judah like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place. ⁷ “The LORD will save the dwellings of Judah first, so that the honor of the house of David and of Jerusalem’s inhabitants may not be greater than that of Judah. ⁸ On that day the LORD will shield those who live in Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the Angel of the LORD going before them. ⁹ On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem.

12:1–14:21 This second oracle in Part II of the book revolves around two scenes: the final siege of Jerusalem, and the Messiah’s return to defeat Israel’s enemies and establish his kingdom. (CSB)

12:1 *An Oracle.* Cf 9:1. Here the burden of God’s Word is “concerning Israel,” promising salvation to His people. (TLSB)

Israel. The whole nation, not just the northern kingdom. Judah and Jerusalem, however, are the main focus of attention. (CSB)

The LORD, who stretches ... lays ... forms. This description of the Lord’s creative power shows that he is able to perform what he predicts; it also strengthens the royal and sovereign authority of the message. (CSB)

The One who makes these promises is no earthly ruler but the Creator of heaven and earth, who gives life to humans. What He did in the beginning shows what He can do at the end. He has global power. (TLSB)

This is a favorite picture to show the unlimited power of Jehovah, Is. 42:5; 44:24. (Kretzmann)

12:2 *cup that sends all ... reeling.* The cup's contents often symbolize God's wrath, here causing people to stagger (cf. Jer 25:15-31). Enemies attacking Jerusalem imagine an easy victory. Luther pictured the Lord saying, "Very well, come on, try your tricks, go on and drink. I will present you with a drink that will serve you well: you will stumble so that you will reel along very violently." (TLSB)

WILL BE BESIEGED – literally, "and also upon Judah shall it be in the siege of Jerusalem," the entire country and its capital being involved in the severe trial which would come upon its neighbors. (Kretzmann)

12:3 *that day.* The phrase is used often in chs. 12–14 (12:4, 6, 8–9, 11; 13:1–2, 4; 14:4, 6, 8–9, 13, 20–21). (CSB)

This expression occurs seven times in chapter 12 and 17 times in chapters 12-14. God is speaking of the end times, when He will destroy all enemies. On that day, the "holy city, new Jerusalem," will come down from heaven (Rev 21:2). Jerusalem and Judah represent the Church. (TLSB)

IMMOVABLE ROCK – The Lord laid a stone in Zion (Is 28:16) that proves to be a "stone of stumbling" for those who disobey the Word (1 Pt 2:8) (TLSB)

all the nations ... gathered against her. See 14:2, 12; Joel 3:9–16; cf. Rev 16:16–21. (CSB)

The worldwide gathering of enemies against Jerusalem points to the spiritual nature of what is being described here. (TLSB)

12:4 *panic ... madness ... blind.* Listed in Dt 28:28 among Israel's curses for disobeying the stipulations of the covenant. Now these curses are turned against Israel's enemies. (CSB)

watchful eye. See Ps 32:8; 33:18. (CSB)

12:5 STRONG...GOD – The source of strength and victory for Judah and the Church is the Lord of hosts (9:15). Of Him we sing, "A mighty fortress is our God." (TLSB)

12:6 Like a fire destroying wood and sheaves of grain, Judah's discerning leaders (see v. 5) will consume their enemies (cf. Jdg 15:3–5).

I will make. Also vv 2–3. All that happens is God's doing. (TLSB)

blazing pot ... flaming torch ... shall devour. Further images of how the Lord will consume His enemies. (TLSB)

WILL REMAIN INTACT – This is so that the renewed people could fitly become the nucleus of the New Testament Jerusalem, the Church of Christ. (Kretzmann)

12:7 SAVE THE DWELLINGS OF JUDAH – People who lived in Judah outside the capital city of Jerusalem, where the temple was located, may have considered themselves second-class citizens. But the Lord puts them first in line for salvation. (TLSB)

glory. Jesus was not born in Jerusalem but in the small Judean town of Bethlehem. Here the “glory of the Lord shone” (Lk 2:9). (TLSB)

HONOR OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID – The house of David being the royal family as continued in the descendants of Zerubbabel. The meaning evidently is this, that Jerusalem would have no preference before the rest of the country at the approach of the enemies, but the entire covenant people would in the same degree enjoy the protection of the Lord. (Kretzmann)

12:8 *like David.* Like a great warrior. (CSB)

like God. Cf. Ex 4:16; 7:1. (CSB)

like the Angel of the LORD. The above are bold comparisons that assure believers of the eternal protection the Lord provides, even for the weak. (TLSB)

12:9 *I will seek to destroy.* The Creator’s ultimate purpose “on that day” is to destroy all enemies of His Church (Rv 21:8). (TLSB)

This is the definite, energetic purpose of the Lord with regard to His people. It is a remarkable fact, one full of glorious comfort, that the Church of God has emerged from all its conflicts with renewed strength and power, that even in the worst persecutions, the blood of the Christians was the seed of the Church. (Kretzmann)

12:1–9 The day is coming, declares the Lord, when the enemies of His people, represented here by Jerusalem and Judah, will be destroyed. When confronted by spiritual foes who cause us to feel weak and helpless, we must keep telling ourselves that our strength is in the One “who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth” (v 1). He will protect and save us. • Almighty Father, my refuge and strength, remove all fear from my heart, and make me confident of Your ultimate victory. Amen. (TLSB)

Mourning for the One They Pierced

¹⁰ “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. ¹¹ On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. ¹² The land will mourn, each clan by itself, with their wives by

themselves: the clan of the house of David and their wives, the clan of the house of Nathan and their wives, ¹³ the clan of the house of Levi and their wives, the clan of Shimei and their wives, ¹⁴ and all the rest of the clans and their wives.

12:10 *a spirit.* The Lord will pour out on His people spiritual gifts that will cause them to mourn and plead for mercy when they look on “Him whom they have pierced.” (TLSB)

look on. The emphasis seems to be on looking “to” the Messiah in faith (cf. Nu 21:9; Isa 45:22; Jn 3:14–15). (CSB)

pierced. Cf. Ps 22:16; Isa 53:5; Jn 19:34; partly fulfilled in Jn 19:37. (CSB)

The object of this piercing is God Himself, a prophecy of what happened to Jesus on the cross (Jn 19:34). (TLSB)

mourns for an only child. Cf. Jer 6:26. (CSB)

This grief is extremely intense, such as for an only child, a firstborn, or a fallen king. Luth: “To mourn for Christ’s sake is to imitate the crucifixion, death, and burial of Christ so that we mortify our flesh ... [and] say with the apostle Paul: ‘Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its ... lusts’ ” (AE 20:140). (TLSB)

grieves for a firstborn son. Cf. Ex 11:5–6. (CSB)

12:11 *Hadad Rimmon.* The name of either (1) a place near Megiddo, where the people mourned the death of King Josiah (2Ch 35:20–27; see v. 22 there for the plain of Megiddo and vv. 24–25 for the mourning), or (2) a Semitic storm god (see 2Ki 5:18), whose name means “Hadad the thunderer” in Babylonian (as in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, 11:98; see also Eze 8:14 for an example of the practice of weeping for a Babylonian deity). (CSB)

Only occurrence of this name in the Bible; may refer to a small village located c 60 mi NW of Jerusalem, a place of great mourning. Though “Hadad” and “Rimmon” (2Ki 5:18) are names of a pagan god, the reference here is likely to mourning for the Judean king Josiah, who was killed on the Plain of Megiddo. (TLSB)

12:12 **MOURN EACH CLAN** – This is a Hebrew word that means “alone,” separate, apart” and indicates the individual nature of this morning. No one can mourn in place of another. Special mention is made of wives to emphasize that in Israelite society it was the traditional role of women to mourn (cf Jer 9:17; Lk 23:27-29). (TLSB)

Nathan. David’s son (2Sa 5:14; cf. Lk 3:31). (CSB)

12:13 *house of Levi.* Israelite priests were from the tribe of Levi, and Levites served in the temple. (TLSB)

Shimei. Son of Gershon, the son of Levi (Nu 3:17–18, 21). The repentance and mourning are led, then, by the civil (royal) and religious leaders. (CSB)

Shimei was the son of Gershon, son of Levi (Ex 6:16-17). The four families of David, Nathan, Levi and Shimei represent the kingdom of holy priests (1 Pt 2:5; Rev 1:6) who lament their sin, which caused Jesus to be pierced. (TLSB)

12:14 *all the families*. Universal mourning (cf Rv 1:7). (TLSB)

In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to the entire nation, as representative of the Church of the New Testament, in whose members the fruit of Christ's redemption is realized, for sin and for uncleanness. The blood of Christ, shed for the sins of the whole world, has prepared a water of sprinkling which thoroughly cleanses sinners from their uncleanness. Cp. 1 John 1, 7. It is the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost which is shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, also in Holy Baptism. Titus 3:5. (Kretzmann)

13:1 *On that day*. That day of fulfillment when all things will come to pass according to God's plan of salvation. (TLSB)

12:10–13:1 Zechariah prophesies intense mourning for all people. Can there be any sorrow greater than that of beholding the Son of God, His body pierced and bleeding, hanging on the cross? Such a sight produces contrition in the hearts of believers. The Lutheran Confessions define contrition as "the true terror of conscience, which feels that God is angry with sin and grieves that it has sinned" (Ap XIIA 29). For the contrite sinner, the good news is that the death of Christ opened a fountain that cleanses us from sin and uncleanness. We have good reason to sing, "Glory be to Jesus, Who in bitter pains Poured for me the lifeblood From His sacred veins!" (LSB 433:1). • Lord Jesus Christ, grant that I may always know the grace and life eternal found in Your precious blood. Amen. (TLSB)