

ZECHARIAH

Chapter 13

Cleansing From Sin

“On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity. ²“On that day, I will banish the names of the idols from the land, and they will be remembered no more,” declares the LORD Almighty. “I will remove both the prophets and the spirit of impurity from the land. ³And if anyone still prophesies, his father and mother, to whom he was born, will say to him, ‘You must die, because you have told lies in the LORD’s name.’ When he prophesies, his own parents will stab him. ⁴“On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his prophetic vision. He will not put on a prophet’s garment of hair in order to deceive. ⁵He will say, ‘I am not a prophet. I am a farmer; the land has been my livelihood since my youth.’ ⁶If someone asks him, ‘What are these wounds on your body?’ he will answer, ‘The wounds I was given at the house of my friends.’

3:1 *On that day.* That day of fulfillment when all things will come to pass according to God’s plan of salvation. (TLSB)

cleanse them from sin. See 3:4–9; one of the provisions of the new covenant (Jer 31:34; Eze 36:25). (CSB)

No amount of mourning can cleanse a person from sin. A fountain is needed that will provide total purification from uncleanness. That fountain is the blood of Jesus, which “cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn 1:7). Though sin afflicts us, Baptism is “the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” (Ti 3:5) that effects our sanctification. (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 XIA 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)

13:2 *names of the idols.* The influence and fame, and even the very existence, of the idols. (CSB)

Idol worship was a continuing temptation for God’s OT people. The Lord promises that He will eliminate idols “on that day” so that their names will no longer be invoked in worship. (TLSB)

This be so that the very names which had formerly been in the mouths of men everywhere were no longer mentioned, and they shall no more be remembered, the loathing of every form of superstition being so great that men would put aside every thought of the former idolatry and superstition. (Kretzmann)

prophets. False prophecy was still a problem in the postexilic period (see Ne 6:12–14) and would again be a problem in the future (see Mt 24:4–5, 11, 23–24; 2Th 2:2–4). (CSB)

The Baal prophets, filled with the spirit of uncleanness, were vanquished by the Lord at Mount Carmel (1 Kg 18:20-40). False prophets will be totally absent in the new Jerusalem. (TLSB)

This is one of the results of the preaching of the Gospel, as we see also in the case of the people of Ephesus when Paul proclaimed the true God to them. Cf. Acts 19:19. (Kretzmann)

13:3 *lies.* False prophecies. (CSB)

According to God’s Law, children who struck or cursed a parent were to be killed (Ex 21:15, 17). To speak lies in the Lord’s name deserved the same penalty. (TLSB)

parents will stab him. In obedience to Dt 13:6–9. The Hebrew for “stab” is the same as the verb for “pierced” in 12:10, perhaps indicating that the feelings and actions exhibited in piercing the Messiah will now be directed toward the false prophets. (CSB)

Usually those guilty of a capital crime were stoned, but Jer 26:23 tells of a prophet pierced by a sword. (TLSB)

13:4–6 Because of the stern measures just mentioned, a false prophet will be reluctant to identify himself as such and will be evasive in his responses to interrogation. To help conceal his true identity, he will not wear a “prophet’s garment of hair” (v. 4), such as Elijah wore (2Ki 1:8; see also Mt 3:4). Instead, to avoid the death penalty (v. 3), he will deny being a prophet and will claim to have been a farmer since his youth (v. 5). And if a suspicious person notices marks on his body and inquires about them (v. 6), he will claim he received them in a scuffle with friends (or perhaps as discipline from his parents during childhood). Apparently the accuser suspects that the false prophet’s wounds were self-inflicted to arouse his prophetic ecstasy in idolatrous rites (as in 1Ki 18:28; cf. also Lev 19:28; 21:5). (CSB)

On the day that is coming, no person will even desire to pose as a prophet. In the centuries after the return from exile, various sources record that there were no prophets in Israel (1Macc 4:46; 9:27; 14:41) (TLSB)

13:4 *hairy cloak.* The prophet Elijah wore a cloak (1Ki 19:13, 19; 2Ki 2:8, 13–14). No one will try to make people think he is a prophet by following Elijah’s example. (TLSB)

13:5 *I am no prophet ... in my youth.* One who was a worker of the soil, in the manner of Amos, will reject the title of prophet. (TLSB)

the land ... my youth. If the alternative translation in the NIV text note is taken, the meaning is that someone sold him as a slave while still young. (CSB)

13:6 Some take this verse as Messianic, but the interpretation given above seems preferable from the context (e.g., v. 5). (CSB)

False prophets sometimes cut themselves, hoping their god would be moved to respond (1 Ki 18:28). Someone with such wounds would provide an alternate explanation to allay the suspicion that he might be a prophet. (TLSB)

13:2–6 Zechariah warns about false worship and false prophets. Throughout history, false religion has been a serious problem. People today may not call on Baal or Rimmon for help, but idols and false prophets are still in evidence. Luther: “Many a person thinks that he has God and everything in abundance when he has money and possessions” (LC I 5). Idols may be gone from our eyes but not from our hearts. Only when Christ comes again in glory will there be an end to all false religion. • Lord, keep me steadfast in Your Word, safe from all who would deceive me. Amen. (TLSB)

The Shepherd Struck, the Sheep Scattered

⁷ **“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!” declares the LORD Almighty. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones.** ⁸ **In the whole land,” declares the LORD, “two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. ⁹ This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The LORD is our God.’”**

13:7 *my shepherd.* The royal (Messianic) Good Shepherd (cf. the true Shepherd of 11:4–14; contrast the foolish and worthless shepherd of 11:15–17). (CSB)

MY SHEPHERD – Him who is true God, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for the Messiah is the eternal Son of God, who was in the bosom of the Father from eternity and by Him begotten in the great eternal today. (Kretzmann)

In contrast to the worthless shepherd (11:17), this is the Lord’s own shepherd, the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:14), whom the sword would strike. (TLSB)

man who stands next to Me. Unique Hbr phrase meaning “a man, my associate/neighbor” and describing the intimate relationship of Father and Son. (TLSB)

Strike the shepherd. In 11:17 it was the worthless shepherd who was to be struck; now it is the Good Shepherd (cf. also 12:10). (CSB)

Jesus cited these words when He foretold His disciples' defection after His arrest (Mk 14:27). (TLSB)

sheep will be scattered. In fulfillment of the curses for covenant disobedience (Dt 28:64; 29:24–25). This part of the verse is quoted by Jesus not long before his arrest (Mt 26:31; Mk 14:27) and applied to the scattering of the apostles (Mt 26:56; Mk 14:49–50), who in turn are probably typological of the dispersion of the Jews in A.D. 70 and the subsequent years. (CSB)

13:8–9 These verses depict a refining process for Israel. (CSB)

13:8 *one-third.* A remnant, thus revealing God's mercy in the midst of judgment. (CSB)

In describing what to expect in the future, Zechariah drew on past experiences. The one third was likely a symbolic fraction representing those living in Judah after the Babylonian exile. (TLSB)

13:9 FIRE – Fire is used to purify and test precious metals, which are soft enough to work when cold. God leads His people through the fires of affliction to purify them and to test the genuineness of their faith. (TLSB)

call upon My name. In worship and prayer. (TLSB)

They are my people ... The LORD is our God. They will be restored to proper covenant relationship with the Lord (see also Eze 20:30–44). (CSB)

The Lord said to Israel in Egypt, "I will take you to be My people" (Ex 6:7). In the new covenant, this bond is restored: "they shall be my people" (Jer 31:33).

13:7–9 That the Lord of hosts should rouse the sword against His very own Shepherd defies rational explanation. Only in the light of divine revelation can one comprehend the truth that Christ's death on the cross was the supreme act of God's love for us sinners. Luth: "To believe in life in the midst of death, to believe in glory in the midst of sin, to believe in the peace and favor of God in the midst of persecution—this is something beyond every capability of reason. It is truly a miracle in our eyes" (AE 20:151). • Dearest Lord, the fires of life test my will to be Your witness. May Your name seal me against sin and show that I belong to You. Strengthen me to bear the cross and follow You. "Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee." Amen. (LSB 783:1) (TLSB)