



Major Lessons From Minor Prophets Lesson 12 2Q 2013

Heaven's Best Gift (Zechariah)

SUNDAY

The lesson for the day focuses on Zechariah chapter eight, which is about restoration of Zion. Verses 1-3:

Again the word of the LORD Almighty came to me. ² This is what the LORD Almighty says: "I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her."

³ This is what the LORD says: "I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain."

Thoughts?

What is Zion?

Historically, Zion initially meant the southern mount in Jerusalem on which stood a Jebusite fortress which was conquered by David, and where David built his home, thus called the City of David. The ridge on which this fortress was built had a northern mount, called Mount Moriah. It was here that Solomon's Temple and Palace were built. Thus, after Solomon the entire ridge was often referred to as Zion. Further, since the Temple was built on the "sides of the north" this term refers to the place where God dwells and from where God rules. Thus when Scripture states that Lucifer wanted to sit on the sides of the north, it is saying that Lucifer wanted to occupy God's throne. Take God's place in God's Temple.

This is the literal historic reference to Zion. But, as we have discussed many times in here, the literal stories of ancient Israel often are enacted object lessons for a future reality – does this apply to Zion?

What about Hebrews 12:22,23:

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

Thoughts? Is the Mount Zion spoken of in Hebrews the physical mountain located in the Middle East today? What is being referred to in Hebrews?

When we read about Zion, about promises to restore Zion, about people coming to Zion – should we be thinking about the earth as it is today and restoring some ruins in earthly Jerusalem, or is Scripture



pointing us toward the new heaven and new earth when all sin, pain, suffering and death are eternally gone?

And what about the idea of God being jealous for Zion, what would this then mean?

Is God jealous for a physical location, dirt, bricks and mortar? Is God of the same mindset as so many in the Middle East who are fighting for real estate?

When God says He is jealous, for what is He jealous?

Read first paragraph, “God’s plan was...” thoughts? When will Jerusalem be a safe place? What will make Jerusalem a safe place?

What makes a city an unsafe place? What are the possibilities?

- Toxins or poisons – Chernobyl
- Biological hazards or disease – typhoid, yellow fever etc.
- Wild animals
- Untrustworthy and dangerous people

When speaking of making the New Jerusalem a safe place which is the biggest obstacle for God to accomplish and why?

Is it difficult for God to cleanse the environment from toxins, destroy disease or tame wild animals? Is there anything that obstructs God from turning untrustworthy and dangerous people into trustworthy friends?

Would it be necessary for God to heal people, to transform them so all the inhabitants are trustworthy friends in order for Jerusalem to be a safe place?

What obstructs that process?

- Lies about God
- Lies about God’s law
- Lies about the gospel and the plan of salvation
- Which perpetuates fear
- Our own selfish natures, which is inflamed by the lies believed
- Satan and his agencies

Does God have a role for us to play in helping to make Jerusalem a safe place?

Which Jerusalem? What is our role?

Read Zech 8:20-23:



²⁰ This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, ²¹ and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, ‘Let us go at once to entreat the LORD and seek the LORD Almighty. I myself am going.’ ²² And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him.”

²³ This is what the LORD Almighty says: “In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.’ ”

Thoughts? What does this mean?

Is this talking about earthly Jerusalem, or is Jerusalem here used symbolically to represent those who know God?

What does it mean ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew because God is with him or her?

What were the Jews supposed to do? Did they do it?

Then, has God given up? To whom will people from all nations turn in order to find the truth about God? If someone is genuinely united with God, and witnesses the truth about God, and from their witness leads people to God, would they be one of the “Jews” referred to in this passage?

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹ No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man’s praise is not from men, but from God. Rom 2:28,29

So, what do we conclude from this?

Is Zechariah prophesying of a day, when people, who have been transformed in the inner man, such that Christ’s character, God’s law of love, has been reproduced in them, will lead people from the world back to God?

Then, should we ask, Are we one of those people?

What do we need in order to be one of those people?

- We need to know God, His law of love, His methods, and be able to help people differentiate the truth from the lie
- We need the Holy Spirit to reproduce in us Christlike character so we live out His methods of beneficence in our lives
- We need to demonstrate progressive growth in character, become more like Jesus each day

Read fifth paragraph, “The gospel accounts...” thoughts? Is that what the Bible actually says, that Jesus will draw “all peoples” to Himself, or is this altered in some way?



The Greek doesn't have the word "people" or "men" but simply, "all." Jesus when lifted up will draw "all" unto Himself." What is the difference?

Col 1:20 "all things in heaven and earth are reconciled to Christ at the cross." The unfallen beings in the universe needed the Cross to refute the lies, reveal the truth about God and solidify them in their loyalty. Thus, Christ drew men, but also angels to Himself at the cross and solidified the universe in loyalty to God.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "Jesus' triumphal entry..." thoughts?

How does Jesus bring this? How does He achieve it?

What are the options?

- Imposed Law View
 - Deviations from the law are not in themselves destructive, and do not in themselves bring death, but instead bring condemnation from the ruling authority.
 - The ruling authority has set death as the imposed penalty and is now required to inflict it
 - Christ came to take the sinners' place on death row and pays the legal penalty, earning the right of pardon from His Father
 - He offers the legal payment to humans
 - Those who accept it get pardoned
 - Those who don't accept the payment find God will use divine power to torture and kill, thus sending a message throughout the universe, that God has the right to kill if you don't accept the payment of Christ
 - In the future sin never rises again because if it does God just kills the rebellious
 - Thus, fear of God's punishment prevents rebellion, i.e. eternal fear of God
 - Problem – perfect love casts out all fear, but this traditional model perpetuates eternal fear and destroys love and trust in God
- Natural Law View
 - Sin is deviation from God's design for life
 - Humankind is actually in a terminal state, out of harmony from God's design
 - God sent Christ, to take our iniquity, our sinfulness, our terminal state upon Himself and cure it, according to God's purpose
 - All who are won back to trust in God, by the truth Jesus revealed, open their hearts and experience via the Holy Spirit the reproduction of Christ's character within, thus it is "no longer I that live but Christ lives in me."
 - Those who refuse to trust God die of their terminal condition, not as an infliction from God.
 - The saved see and comprehend that God did everything to save those who were lost and realize those lost died from their condition not from an infliction from God



- Love and trust for God, and love for His methods increase and the universe is eternally safe because it is inhabited only by individuals who love God and others more than self, and would rather die than ever harm another.

Which view do you like better? Which view is more consistent with the evidence? Which view is more consistent with the character Jesus revealed?

Read second paragraph, “When Jesus triumphantly...” thoughts?

Why were some rejoicing in the idea of Christ using military might to overthrow the Romans?

What about today? Are any Christians falling into the same trap? Do some Christians teach Jesus, 2000 years ago, despite horrible abuse and mistreatment loved perfectly, but after going to heaven has, over the last 2000 years, had a change of heart and doesn't come back the gentle loving Jesus, but instead an angry wrathful Attila the Hun type of being – coming to torture and destroy?

Do people ever actually stop and think about what they are saying?

When Jesus comes back what character will He have? It will be perfect love!

But will His perfect love prevent the suffering and loss of the wicked? Why not? What is the cause of their suffering? Is it inflicted by Jesus?

I have been accused of teaching Universalism because I teach that God doesn't have to inflict death and that God continues to love everyone. The reason some think this is because they are stuck in an imposed law construct and haven't yet comprehended the truth of God's design for life. Thus, if we take away God inflicting death, to those stuck in that false model they conclude then everyone must be saved.

But, I do not teach Universalism. Sadly, some will die terribly, just as some patients, who refuse rehab and continue to drink a fifth of vodka a day, die terribly. But the patient/sinner doesn't die as an infliction at the hands of the doctor/God. The wicked in the end die as a result of their terminal condition, NOT as an infliction from the hand of God.

If we teach that the wicked die because God inflicts it, then we perpetuate eternal fear of God and rebellion never ceases.

TUESDAY

Read Zech 12:10:

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.



Thoughts?

To what is this passage referring?

- Is it applicable only to the tribe of Judah, David's literal descendants?
- Is it applicable only to Jews, the literal genetic descendants of Jacob?
- Is it applicable to all those who have been renewed like Abraham and experience grace poured upon them?

What does it mean they will mourn?

Read Zech 13:1-2:

“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.

Thoughts? What do you hear in this passage? Is there a promise? What is the promise?

Is it a promise of legal pardon, or of healing and transformation?

How is it we miss this throughout Scripture?

Read Zech 13:6:

If someone asks him, ‘What are these wounds on your body?’ he will answer, ‘The wounds I was given at the house of my friends.’

What do you think this is referring to? Is it suggesting that in the new heaven some will not understand the story of Jesus and need to be instructed?

WEDNESDAY

Read Zech 13:7-9:

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.' ”

Then Read second paragraph, “In Zechariah 13:7-9 the prophet...” thoughts?

What does it mean the “Lord’s judgment goes out against the Good Shepherd?”

Are they suggesting God inflicted something upon Jesus? That God acted like a human judge and imposed punishment upon Jesus?

How do you understand God’s law? Imposed or natural?

If God’s law is imposed, like a Roman Emperor, then God is seen as imposing punishment, as judging Jesus and inflicting punishment upon Him.

How do we see it if we understand God’s law is the design parameters for life, that humankind is out of harmony with those parameters and in a terminal condition? Then what is God’s judgment of Christ? That this is the only pathway whereby Christ can accomplish God’s purpose of rebuilding and restoring humanity to God’s original ideal.

Consider some of these quotes from various Christian organizations and publications and answer, Are they coming from the law of love, natural law, God’s design for life, or a human, Roman-like imposed law construct?

- Here is a statement from a paper called, “A Call to Evangelical Unity,” from *Christianity Today*, June 14, 1999:
“We affirm that the atonement of Christ by which, in his obedience, he offered a perfect sacrifice, **propitiating the Father by paying for our sins** and satisfying divine justice on our behalf according to God's eternal plan, is an essential element of the Gospel.”
- And this is from *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*:
“The word “propitiation” properly signifies the **turning away of wrath by a sacrifice**. Thus it signifies **appeasement**... According to Leon Morris: “The consistent Bible view is that the sin of man has incurred the wrath of God. That wrath is averted only by Christ’s atoning offering. From this standpoint his **saving work is properly called propitiation.**”¹
- In the book, *The Cross of Christ*, we read:
“Paul always speaks of people being reconciled to God (2Cor 5:19; Rom 5:10; Col. 1:20). He never refers to God being reconciled to us. **In spite of that fact**, [my



comment - *he just affirms the Bible nowhere refers to God being reconciled to man, yet now he denies this fact and argues that "in spite of what the Bible says" God did have to be reconciled to man]* however, we should recognize that sin affected both sides. Humanity's rebellion and sense of guilt alienated it from God, while **God was separated from humankind by His necessary hatred of and judgment on sin (His wrath). Christ's sacrificial death (propitiation) removed the barrier to reconciliation from God's side."** ⁱⁱ

What is suggested as separating God and man? Notice, according to this view, it isn't sin, it is God's hatred and judgment – i.e. God's hostile attitude that separates us from Him. And thus they teach that a barrier to our relationship was removed from God's side. Do you realize how totally horrible, false, even Satanic this idea is?

God has nothing wrong in Him that He needed Christ to die to fix. Yet, this false theology, which dominates much of church leadership, is what is promulgated, and it obstructs the completion of the gospel commission.

- Here are two quotations from *Seventh-day Adventist 27 Fundamental Beliefs*:

"Christ's self-sacrifice is *pleasing* to God because this sacrificial offering **took away the barrier between God and sinful man** in that **Christ fully bore God's wrath on man's sin**. Through Christ, God's wrath is not turned into love but is turned away from man and borne by Himself." ⁱⁱⁱ

"For a loving God to maintain His justice and righteousness, the atoning death of Jesus Christ became 'a moral and legal necessity.' God's 'justice requires that sin be carried to judgment. **God must therefore execute** judgment on sin and thus on the sinner. **In this execution the Son of God took our place, the sinner's place, according to God's will.**" ^{iv}

- From *Ministry Magazine*:

"Why did **God the Father choose** a cross to be the instrument of death? Why did He not choose to have Christ instantly beheaded or quickly run through with a spear or sword? **Was God unjust in executing judgment on Christ with a cross** when He could have done it by beheading, a noose, a sword, a gas chamber, a bolt of lightning, or a lethal injection?" ^v

- Angel Rodriguez, of the Biblical Research Institute writes:

"One of the fundamental problems of the Moral Influence Theory is that it rejects the substitutionary nature of Christ's death. The idea that **God had to kill the innocent** instead of the guilty in order to save us is considered a violation of justice." (emphasis mine). ^{vi}

Did God execute His Son on the Cross? Or was Christ murdered at the instigation of Satan and unholy men? Is God the source of killing, execution, and death, or does death arise from sin? The idea that God requires sacrifice to assuage, appease, or propitiate His wrath is pagan and Isaiah prophesied we



would misunderstand what Christ did just that way:

“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, **yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.**” Isa 53:4

What happens in the heart of beings if they believe God is the source of inflicted death?

We misunderstand because we have accepted a lie about God’s law, that God runs His universe like sinful human beings run earth. How many want to live in a universe run like we run our planet?

Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world.”

God’s ways are NOT our ways – yet we doggedly persist in misrepresenting God’s kingdom as being like fallen human governments.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, “In the last chapter...” thoughts?

Do you think the last chapter is referring to earthly Jerusalem in a literal sense, or is it a symbolic sense?

When Paul refers to those who are God’s children being part of heavenly Jerusalem, could Zechariah apply to those?

Will the wicked of the world, one day, attack the righteous? And does Scripture refer to the righteous as the bride of Christ? And what else is the bride of Christ described as in Scripture?

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband... One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. Rev 12:2,9,10

Could Zechariah be referring to the time when the world turns against God’s people on earth and attempts to kill them?

Read third paragraph, “The closing section...” thoughts?

Why will the entire city be filled with the holiness of the temple?

What is the temple constructed from?



What is the New Jerusalem?

What is the shape of the MH place?

What is the shape of the NJ?

Read last paragraph, “When these glorious...”

FRIDAY

Read question 1 – thoughts? Is there a difference in being gracious, kind, loving, seeking to relieve suffering, helping those down trodden, and seeking to gain control of government and fix the problems of sin through governmental policy and legislation?

Where do we draw the line between living Christian lives, representing Christ, ministering to others, and being diverted into false politics and using the church’s energy and resources on trying to reform government instead of people?

Read question 2 – thoughts?

Why is it that without Christ’s first coming there would be not second, other than the obvious mathematical fact that two always follows one? What is the functional reason that the first coming, in which Christ suffered and died, had to precede the coming in which sin is eliminated?

Read question 3 – thoughts?

What do you understand the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to be? What is its purpose? Is there any reason it hasn’t occurred?

ⁱ Duffield, G. P., & Van Cleave, N. M. (1983), *Foundations of Pentecostal theology* (188), Los Angeles, Calif.: L.I.F.E. Bible College.

ⁱⁱ Knight, George, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 74.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Seventh-day Adventist Believe* 27, p. 111.

^{iv} *ibid.*, p. 111.

^v Whidden, W., *Ministry Magazine*, February 2007.

<http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2007/February/sinners-in-the-hands-of-god.html>.

^{vi} Rodriguez, A., *Adventist World Review*, December 2007; p. 40.