Zechariah 12:1-9

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

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***Zechariah 12:1–9***  
**1** The oracle of the word of **YHWH** concerning Israel: Thus declares **YHWH**, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him: **2** “Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah. **3** On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it. **4** On that day, declares **YHWH**, I will strike every horse with panic, and its rider with madness. But for the sake of the house of Judah I will keep my eyes open, when I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. **5** Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, ‘The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through **YHWH Tsava’ot**, their God.’ **6** “On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a blazing pot in the midst of wood, like a flaming torch among sheaves. And they shall devour to the right and to the left all the surrounding peoples, while Jerusalem shall again be inhabited in its place, in Jerusalem. **7** “And **YHWH** will give salvation to the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not surpass that of Judah. **8** On that day **YHWH** will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of **YHWH**, going before them. **9** And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

1. The oracle of Zech 11 speaks of God’s punishment because His people and their leadership were disobedient. How was that symbolized by the two staffs?

As a result of their disobedience, there will be a separation between them and YHWH (a breaking of the staff “Favor” representing God’s covenant of protection) as well as disunity between the people themselves (a breaking of the staff “Union.”)

1. Chapter 12 begins the final oracle of Zechariah, which continues through chapter 14 (the end of the book) in which we see that Chapter 11 is not the end of the story for God’s people. In Zech 12:1 YHWH is introduced as the one “**who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him.**” Why do you think this is significant? And how does this phrase relate to the meaning of “**YHWH Tsava’ot**” (YHWH of hosts) the title of YHWH most frequently used in Zechariah?

Zechariah reminds his audience that God is the creator of all things – of things in heaven, on the earth, and all of mankind. This is the same thing he conveys with the title “**YHWH Tsava’ot**,” since this refers to His authority over the all things created, in heaven and on earth, including all of mankind and everything else created.

1. It is interesting that Zech 12:1 says YHWH created the “**spirit of man within him**”. Why do you think he stated it this way, instead of just saying YHWH “created man”?

Man is more than flesh and blood; he is also spirit. Since the spirit within man is being focused on in this verse, it would seem to indicate that this spiritual component of man is the most important part of YHWH’s creation of man.

1. What does it mean that Jerusalem will become a “cup of staggering” to the all the surrounding peoples? Look also at Isaiah 51:17-23.

***Isaiah 51:17–23***  
**17** Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of YHWH **the cup of his wrath**, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl, **the cup of staggering.** **18** There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne; there is none to take her by the hand among all the sons she has brought up. **19** These two things have happened to you— who will console you?— devastation and destruction, famine and sword; who will comfort you? **20** Your sons have fainted; they lie at the head of every street like an antelope in a net; they are full of the wrath of YHWH, the rebuke of your God. **21** Therefore hear this, you who are afflicted, who are drunk, but not with wine: **22** Thus says your Lord, YHWH, your God who pleads the cause of his people: “Behold, I have taken from your hand **the cup of staggering**; **the bowl of my wrath** you shall drink no more; **23** and I will put it into the hand of your tormentors, who have said to you, ‘Bow down, that we may pass over’; and you have made your back like the ground and like the street for them to pass over.”

From Isaiah it is clear that the “cup of staggering” is the God’s “cup of wrath”. Those who drink from God’s cup of wrath will stagger as one who is overcome by strong drink, however they are not drunk from wine but rather overcome by God’s wrath.

The “two things” Isaiah talk about are: 1) I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering, and 2) I will put it into the hand of your tormentors.

Zech 12 is focusing on “the second thing”: God is about to use Jerusalem as an instrument of delivering His wrath to all the surrounding peoples.

1. In these first 9 verses, how many times does Zechariah use the phrase “**on that day**”? What day is this referring to? Look at Jeremiah 25:15-16 and Isaiah 2:11-17 (Note that Isaiah 2 is also clearly linked to the prior chapter of Zechariah, Zech 11:1-3.) And also compare to Rev 14:7-10 and Rev 16:17-20.

***Isaiah 2:11–17***   
**11** The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and YHWH alone will be exalted **in that day**. **12** **For YHWH Tsava’ot has a day** against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low; **13** against all the **cedars of Lebanon**, lofty and lifted up; and against all the **oaks of Bashan**; **14** against all the lofty mountains, and against all the uplifted hills; **15** against every high tower, and against every fortified wall; **16** against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft. **17** And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low, and YHWH alone will be exalted **in that day**.

***Jeremiah 25:15–16… 25:33*** (ESV)  
**15** Thus YHWH, the God of Israel, said to me: “Take from my hand this **cup of the wine of wrath,** and make **all the nations** to whom I send you drink it. **16** They shall **drink and stagger** and be crazed because of the sword that I am sending among them…”

**33** “And those pierced by YHWH **on that day** shall extend from one end of the earth to the other. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall be dung on the surface of the ground.

***Revelation 14:7–10*** (ESV)  
**7** And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because **the hour of his judgment has come,** and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.” **8** Another angel, a second, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made **all nations drink the wine** of the passion of her sexual immorality.” **9** And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “**If anyone worships the beast and its image** and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, **10** **he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger,** and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

Those who follow the beast (the foolish shepherd of Zech 11) will drink the wine of God’s wrath from the cup of his anger (the cup of staggering).

***Revelation 16:17–20***  
**17** The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, “**It is done!**” **18** And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. **19** The great city was split into three parts, and **the cities of the nations fell**, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her **drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. 20** And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found.

The day of YHWH’s judgment is the day his wrath will be poured out upon the nations. They will be overcome by the destruction on that day. “**On that day**” is used 6 times in these 9 verses alone, and 17 times in this oracle (Zech 12-14).

1. In Zech 12:3, how is Jerusalem to be “a heavy stone” for all the peoples? What is the picture here?

A “heavy stone” is parallel to a “cup of staggering” in the prior verse. Picture many workmen lifting together a huge stone block, but because the stone is too big, they all get hurt in the process. This is symbolic of all the nations working together to attack Jerusalem, but since Jerusalem is being protected by God, all the nations end up being destroyed in the process.

1. In the last phrase of Zech 12:2, the Hebrew is not entirely clear. The ESV translates this as “**the siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah**”. What do you think this means? Where is Jerusalem in relation to Judah? What is a siege and where exactly will it occur?

It seems to imply that many nations will siege against Jerusalem, and that somehow in this process these nations will also come against the rest of Judah in the same way.

Jerusalem is within the territory of Judah. Jerusalem is effectively the capital city of Judah. If Jerusalem falls, all of Judah in effect falls as well. So to siege against the capital is to make war against the entire territory.

A siege is a sustained attack upon a walled city. The siege here is against Jerusalem. The smaller places of Judah are primarily bystanders, watching the siege against take place against their capital city, knowing that their fate is also in the balance, depending upon who wins this siege.

1. In Zech 12:4, what does this phrase mean: “**But for the sake of the house of Judah I will keep my eyes open**?”

As God is striking down all the horses and their riders, He will “keep his eyes open.” In other words, He will not destroy indiscriminately, but will watch to make sure not to destroy those from the house of Judah.

1. Look at Zech 12:5. What do the people of Judah say regarding the siege of Jerusalem? Why? What is the situation? Are the people of Judah doing battle as well?

The people of Judah are primarily bystanders, watching the siege against take place against their capitol city, knowing that their fate is also in the balance, depending upon who wins this siege. The real siege action is taking place in Jerusalem. During a siege the city is isolated. The rest of Judah is watching, and seeing YHWH at work. They can all see how YHWH Tsava’ot is the strength of Jerusalem.

1. What is going on Zech 12:6? What is a “blazing pot” כִּיּוֹר אֵשׁ (**kiyyor esh**)? It seems that all of Judah is actively fighting here.

“On that day” of judgment, the enemy’s siege is over and they are apparently fleeing. As they flee, departing Jerusalem, and retreating from the land of Judah, it would seem that the people of Judah attack. They don’t simply allow their enemy to leave in peace. Judah becomes a fire among sheaves of grain, or a “firepot” among wood.

A blazing pot is a better translated literally as a “fire pot”. This is literally a pot with fire in it, used as a fire starter. Judah will be as a fire starter and the nations around her as wood to be burned.

1. Why does Zech 12:6 say it will be inhabited “**in its place**”?

Jerusalem will be restored to its current location. This is not a “new Jerusalem somewhere else, but located in the very same place it has always been.

1. Zech 12:7 is a bit hard to understand. What do you think it means? What might God be trying to teach us here, as we approach the new life in His kingdom which begins “on that day”?

Jerusalem and the temple there were the glory of all Israel. This was seen as the most special place. But now God is showing that the rural areas and their inhabitants were of equal value. All His people will be rewarded with the same glory. The elite of Jerusalem are not to be honored more than anyone else.

1. In Zech 12:8, what does it mean that “the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David”? What was David like?

We recall David and Goliath – a feeble youth who because of God’s strength led him to victory against impossible odds. A young boy who became king, of whom the people said “Saul killed his thousands, but David his tens of thousands.” The weakest people in Jerusalem will be like David, who was once also weak and feeble, but who because of the strength of God became great and powerful. God will the make the feeble strong, just like He did with David. With God’s help they will be victorious against any giants that come against them.

1. At the end of Zech 12:8, it says “the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of YHWH going before them.” What does this mean? What is the “house of David” in this context?

The house of David refers to the descendants of David, so we have a contrast with “the feeblest” of the land and the descendants of David, seen as the most powerful in the land. The descendants of David were the kingly line, the powerful line. All God’s people are enabled by His strength. If the feeblest are to become like David, then how much more so will the descendants of David grow in their strength (through God)? It will as though this kingly line, with God’s power working through them, will have the power of God himself. They will be messengers of YHWH going forth against their enemies.

In addition, however, the house of David, seems to be specifically referring to “THE descendant of David”, namely Yeshua, the son of David, the lion of the tribe of Judah. In this day of YHWH, we know from Zechariah and other Scriptures that it is Yeshua who will lead His people into battle and bring them victory. So in a very real sense, when Yeshua returns and leads the people into battle, “the house of David shall be like God” because Yeshua, son of David, is also son of God.

1. At the very end of Zech 12:8, it says the house of David will be like the angel of YHWH “**going before them**.” Who does “them” refer to?

Them refers to the “feeblest among them.” The descendants of David will be the leaders, leading the weaker ones – the common people – into battle. Specifically this seems to refer to Yeshua, son of David, leading his people into battle. Yeshua brings with Him the strength of YHWH, and with that strength victory will be won. It will be as if the messenger of YHWH (Yeshua) is leading an “army of many David’s” into battle. Even an opposing army of Goliaths will be destroyed.

1. Zech 12:9 is a good summary of this section. What is the main point?

On that day – the final day of judgment – God will bring His overpowering wrath upon all peoples who have attacked Israel.

1. What does this passage say to you, personally?

I think of God’s anger against his people, and His punishment against them for their disobedience. But He keeps His promise, and His steadfast love never fails. In the end, He returns to rescue His people and avenge all those who sought to harm them. It may seem like God has separated from us at times, and perhaps for our own good He has, but in the end He returns to reclaim us and reinstate us, if we remain obedient to Him.

With God’s strength, the feeblest will be like David. That wasn’t a one-time miracle. God is the same today, and will impart His strength to us in the same way, as we learn to put our faith in Him.