

Zechariah 13:2-9 – Strike the Shepherd

Zechariah 12:10-14 spoke of people looking on the one whom they pierced. There was such great mourning that it is natural to assume that the one who was pierced also died. John saw this prophecy fulfilled in Jesus' first and second comings. John 19:37 saw the fulfillment of this prophecy when the soldier pierced Jesus' side. Revelation 1:7 sees the fulfillment of this prophecy taking place when Jesus comes with the clouds. Zechariah 13:1 links what came before in 12:10-14 with what follows in chapter 13. On that day, a fountain was opened which cleanses from sin and uncleanness.

Read Zechariah 13:1-6.

Verse 2 also occurs "on that day". In keeping with the fountain opened to cleanse, in verse 1, what did God promise to do, in verse 2? Which prophets would be removed? All prophets or just false prophets? Anthony R. Petterson notes that the phrase "false prophet" was never used in the OT. It was used in the NT. In the OT, sometimes a prophet was said to have a false vision or to speak falsely, but the phrase "false prophet" was never used despite the fact that there were many false prophets in the OT. (13:2)

In verse 3, what would the parents do if their child prophesied? Does this verse give us any clues about what type of prophets were in view in verse 2? (13:3)

In verses 4 and 5, "on that day" what would the "prophets" do to hide the appearance of being a prophet? What clues are there in these verses concerning what types of prophets were in view? What does the hairy cloak refer to? (13:4-5)

In verse 6, what would these "prophets" say when they were asked about their wounds? With friends like that, who needs enemies! What do the wounds refer to? (13:6)

Read Zechariah 13:7-9.

Verse 7 contains the last of the Zechariah texts quoted in the NT. Part of verse 7 was quoted by Jesus after he left the upper room and headed to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane. See Matthew 26:31 and Mark 14:27. In verse 7, how was the shepherd described? What happened to the shepherd? Who was commanded to strike the shepherd? Who gave the command? (13:7)

When Jesus quoted Zechariah 13:7, he said “I will strike the shepherd”, as recorded by Matthew and Mark. According to Jesus, who would strike the shepherd? Jesus obviously understood that he was the shepherd who would be struck. What would happen to the sheep when the shepherd was struck? Both the Hebrew and Greek words can mean to strike without killing or to strike so that the person dies. What clues do we have in verses 7-9 that would indicate whether or not this was striking to kill? (13:7-9)

In verse 7, what would happen to the little ones? (13:7)

In verse 8, “the whole land” could refer to all the land of Judah or it could refer to the whole known world. Which do you think best fits the context? (13:8)

In verse 8, what would happen in the whole land? Verses 8 and 9 are a stark contrast to Zechariah 12:1-9 where God promised to protect Judah and Jerusalem. (13:8-9)

In verse 9, what would happen to the third who survived? What was the end result of the process? (13:9)

When do you think the refining and testing of verses 8-9 will occur, or have occurred? (13:8-9)

It can be helpful to ask how the Jews understood these Old Testament passages. But that only goes so far. When Jesus asked the Jewish leaders about the meaning of Psalm 110:1, they were not able to answer him. The Jewish leaders of Jesus’ time could not conceive of the Messiah being called “lord” by King David. They fell into the common trap of ignoring any scripture that did not fit into their neat little boxes. They definitely could not conceive of the idea that the Messiah would actually be God come in the flesh, the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God. Some say that when Jesus quoted verses like Zechariah 13:7, that he was just using the scripture as a general principle. They think Jesus used the passage to say that when leaders are removed, their followers scatter. While Zechariah is difficult to interpret, it is important to look at the overall picture. Zechariah 9:9 was literally fulfilled by Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. John said “these things had been written about him” (John 12:15-16). When Jesus was pierced, John said that it happened “that the Scripture might be fulfilled” (John 19:36-37). Zechariah chapters 9-13 have a focus on a coming leader who was initially accepted but then rejected, pierced and struck down. This resulted in a cleansing and purifying.