

# CHAPTER 13

In this chapter we have,

**I.** Some further promises relating to gospel-times. Here is a promise of the remission of sins (v. 1), of the reformation of manners (v. 2), and particularly of the convicting and silencing of false prophets (v. 2-6).

**II.** A clear prediction of the sufferings of Christ and the dispersion of his disciples thereupon (v. 7), of the destruction of the greater part of the Jewish nation not long after (v. 8), and of the purifying of a remnant of them, a peculiar people to God (v. 9).

## ~~<REV>~~ ZECHARIAH 13:1-6

### EVANGELICAL PREDICTIONS

Behold the Lamb of God *taking away the sin of the world*, the sin of the church; for *therefore* was the Son of God manifested, to *take away our sin*, ~~<REV>~~1 John 3:5.

**I.** He takes away the guilt of sin by the blood of his cross (v. 1): *In that day*, in the gospel-day, *there shall be a fountain opened*, that is, provision made for the cleansing of all those from the pollutions of sin who truly repent and are sorry for them. *In that day*, when the Spirit of grace is poured out to set them a mourning for their sins, they shall not mourn as those who have no hope, but they shall have their sins pardoned, and the comfort of their pardon in their bosoms. Their consciences shall be purified and pacified by the *blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin*, ~~<REV>~~1 John 1:7. For Christ is exalted to give both repentance and remission of sins; and where he gives the one no doubt he gives the other. This *fountain opened* is the pierced side of Jesus Christ, spoken of just before (~~<REV>~~ Zechariah 12:10), for thence came there out *blood and water*, and both for cleansing. And those who *look upon Christ pierced*, and mourn for their sins that pierced him, and are therefore in bitterness for him, may look again upon Christ pierced and rejoice in him, because it pleased the

Lord thus to smite this rock, that it might be to us a *fountain of living waters*. See here,

**1.** How we are polluted; we are all so; we have sinned, and sin is uncleanness; it defiles the mind and conscience, renders us odious to God and uneasy in ourselves, unfit to be employed in the service of God and admitted into communion with him, as those who were ceremonially unclean were shut out of the sanctuary. The *house of David* and the *inhabitants of Jerusalem* are under *sin*, which is uncleanness. The truth is, we are all *as an unclean thing*, and deserve to have our portion with the unclean.

**2.** How we may be purged. Behold, there is fountain opened for us to wash in, and there are streams flowing to us from that fountain, so that, if we be not made clean, it is our own fault. The blood of Christ, and God's pardoning mercy in that blood, revealed in the new covenant, are,

**(1.)** A fountain; for there is in them an inexhaustible fulness. There is mercy enough in God, and merit enough in Christ, for the forgiving of the greatest sins and sinners, upon gospel-terms. *Such were some of you, but you are washed*, <sup>461</sup>1 Corinthians 6:11. Under the law there were a brazen laver and a brazen sea to wash in; those were but vessels, but we have a fountain to ourselves, overflowing, ever-flowing.

**(2.)** *A fountain opened*; for, whoever will, may come and take the benefit of it; it is opened, not only to *the house of David*, but to *the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, to the poor and mean as well as to the rich and great; or it is opened for all believers, who, as the spiritual seed of Christ, are of the house of David, and, as living members of the church, are inhabitants of Jerusalem. Through Christ all that believe are justified, are *washed from their sins in his blood*, that they may be *made to our God kings and priests*, <sup>465</sup>Revelation 1:5, 6.

**II.** He takes away the dominion of sin by the power of his grace, even of beloved sins. This evermore accompanies the former; those that are washed in the fountain opened, as they are justified, so they are sanctified; the water came with the blood out of the pierced side of Christ. It is here promised that in that day,

**1.** Idolatry shall be quite abolished and the people of the Jews shall be effectually cured of their inclination to it (v. 2): *I will cut off the names of*

*the idols out of the land.* The worship of the idols of their fathers shall be so perfectly rooted out that in one generation or two it shall be forgotten that ever there were such idols among them; they shall either not be named at all or not with any respect; *they shall no more be remembered*, as was promised, <sup><387></sup>Hosea 2:17. This was fulfilled in the rooted aversion which the Jews had, after the captivity, to idols and idolatry, and still retain to this day; it was fulfilled also in the ready conversion of many to the faith of Christ, by which they were taken off from making an idol of the ceremonial law, as the unbelieving Jews did; and it is still in the fulfilling when souls are brought off from the world and the flesh, those two great idols, that they may cleave to God only.

**2.** False prophecy shall also be brought to an end: *I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit*, the prophets that are under the influence of the unclean spirit, to *pass out of the land*. The devil is an *unclean spirit*; sin and uncleanness are from him; he has his prophets, that serve his interests and receive their instructions from him. Take away the unclean spirit, and the prophets would not deceive as they do; take away the false prophets that produce sham commissions, and the unclean spirit could not do the mischief he does. When God designs the silencing of the false prophets he banishes the unclean spirit out of the land, that wrought in them, and was a rival with him for the throne in the heart. The church of the Jews, when they were addicted to idols, did also dote much upon false prophets, who flattered them in their sins with promises of impunity and peace; but here it is promised, as a blessed effect of the promised reformation, that they should be very much set against false prophets, and zealous to clear the land of them; they were so after the captivity, till, through the blindness of their zeal against false prophets, they had put Christ to death under that character, and, after that, there arose many *false Christs and false prophets, and deceived many*, <sup><421></sup>Matthew 24:11. It is here foretold,

**(1.)** That false prophets, instead of being indulged and favoured, should be brought to condign punishment even by their nearest relations, which would be as great an instance as any of flagrant zeal against those deceivers (v. 3): *When any shall set up for a prophet, and shall speak lies in the name of the Lord*, shall preach that which tends to draw people from God and to confirm them in sin, his own parents shall be the first and most forward to prosecute him for it, according to the law. <sup><536></sup>Deuteronomy 13:6-11, "*If thy son entice thee secretly from God, thou shalt surely kill him.* Show thy indignation against him, and prevent any further temptation

from him.” His *father and his mother shall thrust him through when he prophesies*. Note, We ought to conceive, and always to retain, a very great detestation and dread of every thing that would draw us out of the way of our duty into by-paths, as those who cannot *bear that which is evil*, <sup>(66B)</sup> Revelation 2:2. And holy zeal for God and godliness will make us hate sin, and dread temptation, most in those whom naturally we love best, and who are nearest to us; there our danger is greatest, as Adam's from Eve, Job's from his wife; and there it will be the most praiseworthy to show our zeal, as Levi, who, in the cause of God, did not *acknowledge his brethren*, nor *know his own children*, <sup>(67B)</sup> Deuteronomy 33:9. Thus we must hate and forsake our nearest relations when they come in competition with our duty to God, <sup>(68B)</sup> Luke 14:26. Natural affections, even the strongest, must be over-ruled by gracious affections.

(2.) That false prophets should be themselves convinced of their sin and folly, and let fall their pretensions (v. 4): “*The prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision; they shall not repeat it, or insist upon it, but desire that it may be forgotten and no more said of it, being ready themselves to own it was a sham, because God has by his grace awakened their consciences and shown them their error, or because the event disproves their predictions, and gives them the lie, or because their prophecies do not meet with such a favourable reception as they used to meet with, but are generally despised and distasted; they perceive the people ashamed of them, which makes them begin to be ashamed of themselves. And therefore they shall no longer wear a rough garment, or garment of hair, as the true prophets used to do, in imitation of Elijah, and in token of their being mortified to the pleasures and delights of sense.*” The pretenders had appeared in the habit of true prophets; but, their folly being now made manifest, they shall lay it aside, no more to deceive and impose upon unthinking unwary people by it. A modest dress is a very good thing, if it be the genuine indication of a humble heart, and is to instruct; but it is a bad thing if it be the hypocritical disguise of a proud ambitious heart, and is to deceive. Let men be really as good as they seem to be, but not seem to be better than really they are. This pretender, as a true penitent,

[1.] Shall undeceive those whom he had imposed upon: *He shall say, “I am no prophet, as I have pretended to be, was never designed nor set apart to the office, never educated nor brought up for it, never conversant among the sons of the prophets. I am a husbandman, and was bred to that business; I was never taught of God to prophesy, but taught of man to keep*

*cattle*” Amos was originally such a one too, and yet was afterwards called to be a prophet, <sup>3074</sup>Amos 7:14, 15. But this deceiver never had any such call. Note, Those who sorrow after a godly sort for their having deceived others will be forward to confess their sin, and will be so just as to rectify the mistakes which they have been the cause of. Thus those who had *used curious arts*, when they were converted *showed their deeds*, and by what fallacies they had cheated the people, <sup>4098</sup>Acts 19:18.

[2.] He shall return to his own proper employment, which is the fittest for him: *I will be a husbandman* (so it may be read); “I will apply myself to my calling again, and meddle no more with things that belong not to me; for *man taught me to keep cattle from my youth*, and cattle I will again keep, and never set up for a preacher any more.” Note, When we are convinced that we have gone out of the way of our duty we must evince the truth of our repentance by returning to it again, though it be the severest mortification to us.

[3.] He shall acknowledge those to be his friends who by a severe discipline were instrumental to bring him to a sight of his error, v. 6. When he who with the greatest assurance had asserted himself so lately to be a prophet suddenly drops his claims, and says, I am no prophet, every body will be surprised at it, and some will ask, “*What are these wounds, or marks of stripes, in thy hands?* how camest thou by them? Hast thou not been *examined by scourging?* And is not that it that has brought thee to thyself?” (*Vexatio dat intellectum — Vexation sharpens the intellect.*) “Hast thou not been beaten into this acknowledgment? Was it not the rod and reproof that gave thee this wisdom?” And he shall own, “Yes, it was; these are the *wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends*, who bound me, and used me hardly and severely, as a distracted man, and so brought me to my senses.” By this it appears that those parents of the false prophet that *thrust him through* (v. 3) did not do it till they had first tried to reclaim him by correction, and he would not be reclaimed; for so was the law concerning a disobedient son — his parents must first have chastened him in vain before they were allowed to bring him forth to be stoned, <sup>6218</sup>Deuteronomy 21:18, 19. But here is another who was reduced by stripes, and so prevented the capital punishment; and he had the sense and honesty to own that they were his friends, his real friends, who thus wounded him, that they might reclaim him; for *faithful are the wounds of a friend*, <sup>4276</sup>Proverbs 27:6. Some good interpreters, observing how soon this comes after the mention of Christ's being pierced,

think that these are the words of that great prophet, not of the false prophet spoken of before. Christ was wounded in his hands, when they were nailed to the cross, and, after his resurrection, he had the marks of these wounds; and here he tells how he came by them; he received them as a false prophet, for the chief priests called him a deceiver, and upon that account would have him crucified; but he received them in the house of his friends — the Jews, who should have been his friends; for *he came to his own*, and, though they were his bitter enemies, yet he was pleased to call them his *friends*, as he did Judas (*Friend, wherefore hast thou come?*) because they forwarded his sufferings for him; as he called Peter *Satan* — an *adversary*, because he dissuaded him from them.

## ZECHARIAH 13:7-9

### SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST PREDICTED

Here is a prophecy,

**I.** Of the sufferings of Christ, of him who was to be pierced, and was to be the fountain opened. *Awake, O sword! against my Shepherd*, v. 7. These are the words of God the Father, giving order and commission to the sword of his justice to awake against his Son, when he had voluntarily made his soul an offering for sin; for *it pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief; and he was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted*, <sup><350></sup>Isaiah 53:4, 10. Observe,

**1.** How he calls him. “As God, he is *my fellow*;” for he thought it *no robbery to be equal with God*. He and *the Father* are *one*. He was from eternity by him, as one brought up with him, and, in the work of man's redemption, he was his elect, in whom his soul delighted, and the counsel of peace was between them both. “As Mediator, he is *my Shepherd*, that great and good Shepherd that undertook to feed the flock,” <sup><317></sup>Zechariah 11:7. He is the Shepherd that was to lay down his life for the sheep.

**2.** How he uses him: *Awake, O sword! against him*. If he will be a sacrifice, he must be slain, for without the shedding of blood, the life-blood, there was no remission. men thrust him through as the good Shepherd (compare v. 3), that he might *purchase the flock of God with his own blood*, <sup><408></sup>Acts 20:28. It is not a charge given to a rod to correct him,

but to a sword to slay him; for *Messiah the prince must be cut off, but not for himself*, <sup>(208)</sup>Daniel 9:26. It is not the sword of war that receives this charge, that he may die in the bed of honour, but the sword of justice, that he may die as a criminal, upon an ignominious tree. This sword must awake against him; he having no sin of his own to answer for, the sword of justice had nothing to say to him of itself, till, by particular order from the Judge of all, it was warranted to brandish itself against him. he was the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, in the decree and counsel of God; but the sword designed against him had long slumbered, till now at length it is called upon to awake, not, “Awake, and smite him; strike home; not with a drowsy blow, but an awakened one;” for God *spared not his own Son*.

**II.** Of the dispersion of the disciples thereupon: *Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered*. This our Lord Jesus himself declares to have been fulfilled when *all his disciples were offended because of him* in the night wherein he was betrayed, <sup>(105)</sup>Matthew 26:31; <sup>(147)</sup>Mark 14:27. They all *forsook him and fled*. The smiting of the Shepherd is the scattering of the sheep. They were *scattered every one to his own, and left him alone*, <sup>(162)</sup>John 16:32. Herein they were like timorous sheep; yet the Shepherd thus provided for their safety, for he said, *If you seek me, let these go their way*. Some make another application of this; Christ was the *Shepherd* of the Jewish nation; he was smitten; they themselves smote him, and therefore they were justly scattered abroad, and dispersed among the nations, and remain so at this day. These words, *I will turn my hand upon the little ones*, may be understood either as a threatening (as Christ suffered, so shall his disciples, they shall *drink of the cup that he drank of* and be *baptized with the baptism that he was baptized with*) or as a promise that God would gather Christ's scattered disciples together again, and he should give them the meeting in Galilee. Though the little ones among Christ's soldiers may be dispersed, they shall rally again; the lambs of his flock, though frightened by the beasts of prey, shall recover themselves, shall be gathered in his arms and laid in his bosom. Sometimes, when the sheep are scattered and lost in the wilderness, yet the little ones, which, it was feared, would be a prey (<sup>(445)</sup>Numbers 14:31), are brought in, are brought home, and God turns his hand upon them.

**III.** Of the rejection and ruin of the unbelieving Jews (v. 8); and this word has, and shall have, its accomplishment, in the destruction of the corrupt

and hypocritical part of the church. *It shall come to pass that in all the land of Israel two parts shall be cut off and die.* The Roman army laid the country waste, and slew at least two-thirds of the Jews. Some understand by the *cutting off*, and *dying*, or *two parts* in all *the earth*, the abolishing of heathenism and Judaism, that Christianity, the third part, might be left to reign alone. The Jewish worship was quite taken away by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. And, some time after, Pagan idolatry was in a manner extirpated, when the empire became Christian.

**IV.** Of the reformation and preservation of the chosen remnant, those of them that believed, and the Christian church in general (v. 9): *The third part shall be left.* When Jerusalem and Judea were destroyed, all the Christians in that country, having among them the warning Christ gave them to *flee to the mountains*, shifted for their own safety, and were sheltered in a city called *Pella*, on the other side Jordan. We have here first the trials and then the triumphs of the Christian church, and of all the faithful members of it.

**1.** Their trials: *I will bring that third part through the fire of affliction. and will refine and try them as silver and gold are refined and tried.* This was fulfilled in the persecutions of the primitive church, the *fiery trial* which tried the people of God then, <sup>(102)</sup>1 Peter 4:12. Those whom God sets apart for himself must pass through a probation and purification in this world; they must be *tried* that *their faith* may be *found to praise and honour* (<sup>(105)</sup>1 Peter 1:6, 7), as Abraham's faith was when it was tried by the command given him to offer up Isaac, *Now know I that thou fearest me.* They must be tried, that both those that are perfect and those that are not may be *made manifest.* They must be refined from their dross; their corruption must be purged out; they must be brightened and bettered.

**2.** Their triumphs.

**(1.)** Their communion with God is their triumph: *They shall call on my name, and I will hear them.* They write to God by prayer, and receive from him answers of peace, and thus keep up a comfortable communion with him. *This honour have all his saints.*

**(2.)** Their covenant with God is their triumph: *"I will say, It is my people, whom I have chosen and loved, and will own; and they shall say, the Lord is my God, and a God all-sufficient to me; and in me they shall boast every day and all the day long. This God is our God for ever and ever."*