

Chapter 12 begins a prophecy that spans chapters 12-14 and focuses on the LORD's future plans for Israel. This chapter pictures the return of Jesus Christ to empower and defend Israel against their enemies and their reaction as they recognize Him as the Messiah that they crucified and have rejected for centuries.

¹ The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.

“The burden [weight; load] of the word of the LORD for Israel” - The prophets often referred to the “word of the LORD” given to them as burdens, referring to the responsibility of declaring the word of the LORD that was laid on the prophet.

“saith the LORD” - Zechariah reminds us that this word was not his own idea or opinion but came from the LORD Himself.

“which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him” - This word comes from the One Who created everything above us (the heavens), everything beneath us (the foundation of the earth), and our spirit within us. The word comes from the One Who created us and everything around us so it behooves us to listen to what He has to say.

² Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.

In vs. 2-3 the LORD uses two metaphors to describe how He will intervene and protect His people at Jerusalem from the nations that will gather to destroy them at the end of the Great Tribulation. Here the LORD says He will make Jerusalem “a cup of trembling” to those who would besiege the city. The Hebrew word for “trembling” refers to unsteadiness from intoxication. The LORD will make the desire to destroy Jerusalem like an intoxicating drink to the nations around Jerusalem that they will not be able to resist, for He will be the One that brings them to the battle of Armageddon for their own destruction (Zech. 14:2-3).

³ And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

The second metaphor the LORD uses is that He will make Jerusalem a “burdensome [heavy] stone.” The nations of the earth will see Jerusalem as a stone that needs to be removed, but their effort to remove it will only result in them hurting themselves. Trying to lift a heavy stone with jagged edges by hand can cause lacerations and other injuries and the attempt of these nations to destroy Jerusalem will result in their own destruction.

⁴ In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness.

“In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment [confusion; bewilderment], and his rider with madness” - While probably not referring to literal horses, the LORD expresses how He will intervene in the behalf of Jerusalem. In Zechariah's day the horse was a valuable commodity in battle because a rider on horseback had advantages over a soldier on foot. However, the LORD will negate these advantages by causing the horses to become confused and their riders to go insane. In modern warfare this could be seen as the LORD causing machinery (tanks, planes, etc.) and targeting systems to go awry and their operators and their commanders to use faulty judgment.

“and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness” - While the LORD opens His eyes to see the plight of His people, He causes “blindness” to come upon their enemies. Perhaps this refers to cameras, radar and other surveillance systems going offline and becoming useless against the Jews. Or it could refer to war vehicles becoming useless.

⁵ And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God.

Historically Israel has had their greatest military victories when they were putting their trust in the LORD and suffered their greatest defeats when they were in rebellion against Him. In that day when Jerusalem is surrounded by their enemies the leaders of Judah will realize that their only strength and hope for deliverance will come from the trust of their people in the LORD. This realization will give them the courage to trust the LORD themselves.

⁶ In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem.

“In that day will I make the governors of Judah...” - The LORD will respond to the faith of the people and their leaders and cause the leaders to become like a fire that will burn up their enemies as they “devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left.” The LORD will give these governors the courage and strength to lead their people into battle and defeat the enemies of Israel.

“and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem” - The result will not be the one intended by Israel's enemies because they intended to destroy Jerusalem and make it a city of ruins. Instead, the LORD will cause Jerusalem to survive and be inhabited by the people of God (the Jews).

⁷ The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah.

The LORD will begin the victory outside of the city to ensure that Jerusalem and its leaders realize that it was not their military might or leadership skills that won the day but that it was the LORD who gave the victory.

⁸ In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.

“In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem” - A summary of what the LORD has been doing in the last 7 verses as well as what He will continue to do to protect the Jews.

“and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David” - The LORD will defend Jerusalem by empowering its inhabitants. The weakest among them shall be like David, the hero of Israel who faced and defeated Goliath the giant through his faith in the LORD.

“and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them” - At the other end of the spectrum of strength, the “house of David” (the leadership) will be empowered to do almost supernatural feats against their enemies.

⁹ And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Not only will the LORD empower the Jews to fight for themselves, but the LORD Himself will step in and fight against the armies of the nations that have gathered to destroy Jerusalem. We see this in **Rev. 19:11, 15, 17, 18, 21** *“¹¹ And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war... ¹⁵ And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God... ¹⁷ And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; ¹⁸ That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great... ²¹ And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”*

¹⁰ And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. ¹¹ In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications [to ask for favor]” - After the enemies of the Jews have been defeated, God will pour out His Spirit on the Jewish leaders and the inhabitants of Jerusalem as He promised in **Joel 2:28** *“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.”* Holy Spirit is referred to as “the spirit of grace and of supplications” apparently because these are the attributes of the Spirit being exercised at the time. The LORD will be extending grace to the Jews as well as answering their prayers for God’s favor.

“and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced” - Jesus Christ has just returned and delivered them from their enemies. In that day they will look upon Him and recognize Who He is and remember how they crucified Him and continually rejected Him as their Messiah for centuries.

“and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” - The realization of the depth of their sin against their Messiah will cause them to weep and mourn in repentance.

“In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon” - It will be a day of mourning and repentance in Jerusalem. The comparison is made to the mourning that occurred over a century earlier concerning what happened in Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon. The well-loved and godly king Josiah was killed in battle at Hadad-Rimmon and his death was mourned by Judah (2 Chr. 35:22-25).

¹² And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; ¹³ The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; ¹⁴ All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.

The mourning and repentance will spread throughout the land of Israel. The mourning and repentance will be a personal thing, for they do not gather together to mourn publicly but individual families will mourn privately, indicating its genuineness. Even the men and women will mourn separately from each other. The families of David and Nathan represent the royal line, perhaps the highest and lowest positions of it, for this Nathan is not Nathan the prophet but one of the sons of David. The families of Levi and Shimei are also specifically mentioned, representing the priestly order. Shimei was a descendant of Levi, and so represents the highest and lowest positions in the priestly order. Leaders from both the royal line of David and the priestly line of Levi rejected the Messiah, and so their grief and repentance over their sin is mentioned specifically. The remainder of the people also mourn according to their families for their part in rejecting their Messiah.