

## Study 7: Zechariah 12-13:1

### Icebreaker

What's the most trouble you ever got into at school?

### Where are we headed?

We have seen throughout Zechariah a tension – God is passionately protective of his city (his beloved “daughter” Zion: Zech 9:9), but also that his people are still hopelessly rebellious. This tension begins to unfold here as God’s judgment of Jerusalem’s enemies is followed by mourning at the consequences of her people’s rebellion.

### Prayer

Invite the group to pray with you and then read the passage together.

### Observation and interpretation

Why do you think Zechariah introduces the Lord as the one “who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the human spirit within a person” (verse 1)?

Read Zech 12:1-9. Is it right for God to be so violent in his defence of Jerusalem?

By this time, “Judah” can refer to the region in which Jerusalem was found, but it can also more traditionally refer to one of the 12 tribes of Israel. Either way, the idea is that God’s people in surrounding areas are drawn in and included in God’s plans. These plans still centre on Israel, but the others won’t miss out either (hence the comment in verse 7 about the glory of Jerusalem will not be greater than that of Judah). God has not forgotten his long-standing promises to bless the nation of Israel.

Read Zech 12:10-13:1. If “that day” is a good time, when God returns to defend Jerusalem, then why are God’s people mourning?

Who is the “one who they pierced”?

The motif introduced in this passage is one of salvation through disaster: Jerusalem is surrounded by enemies, but God intervenes just as defeat seems inevitable. But while God saves them from all external threats, he also deals with their internal problems: their sin. God changes their attitude and makes them want to seek him.

The description of one “pierced” is a difficult verse in the original language. It seems to refer both to “me” and to “him” being pierced. This takes on special significance in Jesus, who is both “was with God and ... was God” (John 1:1).

Jesus is the final referent of this prophecy. But like many prophecies, it works on multiple levels. It looks back to 2 Chronicles 35:22, where (on the plains of Megiddo) King Josiah was pierced in battle. So the piercing of the mysterious figure in Zechariah 12 is being compared to another infamous day of national disaster – a day when when something on par with losing an only son took away their only hope for the future. Their mourning is not just sadness that he is dead, but also a recognition of their responsibility for the bad things that have happened. These are tears of repentance. Tribe by tribe, they mourn.

### **Implications**

What makes someone an enemy of God's city? What should our attitude be towards them?

Read John 19:33-37. What does Zechariah 12 help us understand about Jesus' death?

Israel's sin leads to the death of their Messiah, Jesus. But in a mind-blowing twist, this is the very way that God heals them and brings the "fountain...to cleanse them from sin" (Zech 13:1).

Read Revelation 1:7. Why does the world mourn when they see Jesus coming again? Will it be a happy day or a sad day for us?

### **Prayer to close**

Pray in thanks and praise for Jesus, the one who was pierced for our sins.

### **Theological and pastoral notes for leaders:**

- The imagery in these passages is confronting – they are intended to shock us with an image of apocalyptic destruction for those opposed to God. We have moved beyond history into the "apocalyptic", the end times when good will finally defeat evil, ushering in the Kingdom of God.
- There is a very strange resolution here – one which will not completely make sense until we meet Jesus (foreshadowed in chapter 9). Jerusalem will be once again threatened with extinction, but opposition to God will finally be defeated. The problems within Israel will be resolved. This will be good news for his people, but also somehow for the whole world. All this will be accomplished through a suffering good shepherd, who is pierced, mourned for, and then brings cleansing from sin.