



# Taking Strides - Starting Over

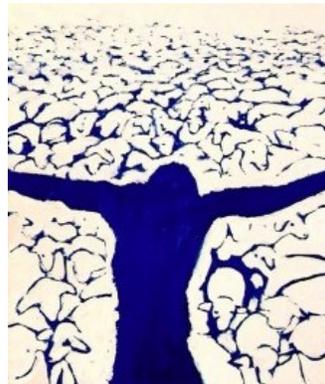
## SAFE with the SHEPHERD

Sheep are safe with a good shepherd. And Jesus said He is our Good Shepherd. How much safer can we be than to know that God Himself would rather die than let us go (John 10:11)!

But sheep need to recognize their shepherd from among the crowd of all the others who claim to have good things for the sheep. They need to recognize His voice to know which one speaks the truth. They need to believe how much he loves and cares for them before they will draw close enough to him to let him help.

“Dr. Andrew Bonar told me how, in the Highlands of Scotland, a sheep would often wander off into the rocks and get into places that they couldn't get out of. The grass on these mountains is very sweet and the sheep like it, and they will jump down ten or twelve feet, and then they can't jump back again, and the

shepherd hears them bleating in distress. They may be there for days, until they have eaten all the grass. The shepherd will wait until they are so faint they cannot stand, and then they will put a rope around him, and he will go over and pull that sheep up out of the jaws of death. "Why don't they go down there when the sheep first gets there?" I asked. "Ah!" He said, "they are so very foolish they would dash right over the precipice and be killed if they did!" And that is the way with men; they won't go back to God till they have no friends and have lost everything. If you are a wanderer I tell you that the Good Shepherd will bring you back the moment you have given up trying to save yourself and are willing to let Him save you His own way." [Moody's Anecdotes, pp. 70-71]



GOOD SHEPHERD  
BY DANIEL BONNELL

FOR  
DISCUSSION

*Why do people run away from God rather than draw close to Him?*

ENCOUNTER

*Read God's Word so that He can speak to you.*

Zechariah 12:1-6, 10; 13:1-2, 7-9

*1 This is the word of the LORD concerning Israel. The LORD, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the spirit of man within him, declares: 2 "I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. 3 On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves. 4 On that day I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness," declares the LORD. "I will keep a watchful eye over the house of Judah, but I will blind all the horses of the nations. 5 Then the leaders of Judah will say in their hearts, 'The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the LORD Almighty is their God.'*

*6 "On that day I will make the leaders of Judah like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place.*

**10** "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

**1** "On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity. **2** "On that day, I will banish the names of the idols from the land, and they will be remembered no more," declares the LORD Almighty. "I will remove both the prophets and the spirit of impurity from the land.

**7** "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!" declares the LORD Almighty. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones. **8** In the whole land," declares the LORD, "two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. **9** This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'"

## EXAMINE

*what the passage says before you decide what it means.*

- ✓ Read it carefully three times. Underline anything you see as important. Write any questions you have.

## EXPLORE

*God's Word by asking questions of what you saw. The notes which follow may help you to think through these questions.*

1) Read Zechariah 12-13. What does God promise to do for His people?

When will these promises be fulfilled? When is "on that day"?

2) Why will 2/3 of the flock be destroyed? How is that consistent with a "good shepherd"?

3) Also from Zechariah 12-13—what do the people need to do to know the goodness of God?

Especially explain what it means to "mourn" (12:10-14). How does this relate to you?

4) What does Jesus, the Good Shepherd, promise to do for you (John 10:1-30)?

5) What do you need to do to know the goodness of the Shepherd?

How is it going?

12:1 - "The burden . . . concerning Israel" introduces chapters 12-14. By describing Yahweh as the Creator of "the heavens," "earth," and "man," Zechariah reminded his audience of God's authority, and ability, to accomplish what He predicted. He is the master over all things celestial, terrestrial, and human.

2 - The Lord "will make Jerusalem" like "a cup" of strong wine to the nations ("all the peoples around"); when they try to consume Jerusalem (a metonymy for all Israel), it will cause them to reel. Jerusalem had previously drunk the cup of the Lord's wrath (Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15-17, 28), but now it will be the nations' turn to drink it. Their "siege" of "Jerusalem" will extend to all the surrounding territory of "Judah." The time in view is after the Lord regathers the Israelites to their land (ch. 10).

3 - "In that day" Jerusalem will also be like "a heavy stone" when the nations try "to lift" and carry it away; they will injure themselves when they try to do so. In that day, "all the nations of the earth will" gather together against Jerusalem (cf. 14:2; Joel 3:9-16; Rev. 16:16-21).

4 - The Lord will cause the weapons that Israel's enemies used to destroy the city to be ineffective, and He will make the hostile soldiers crazy (cf. Deut. 28:28; Judg. 5:22). In this way, He "will watch over the house of Judah" (the Israelites; cf. Ps. 32:8; 33:18).

5 - The leaders of Israel's groups outside Jerusalem will realize that Yahweh Almighty, "their God," is making the people of Jerusalem strong supporters of them.

6 - "In that day," the Lord will not only preserve His people from the attacks of their enemies, but He will also make them effective as they aggressively attacked them (cf. Judg. 15:3-5; Esth. 9:1-28).

7 - Yahweh will defend the outlying areas "of Judah first," so the people from David's line and the residents of Jerusalem would not conclude that they were more important in God's sight (cf. Jer. 9:23-24; 1 Cor. 1:29, 31; 12:22-26; 2 Cor. 10:17). All the Jews will see that it was "the LORD" who was responsible for their deliverance. This will evidently end their fighting among themselves (cf. 11:6).

8-9 - As part of His defense of them, the Lord will strengthen

the "feeble" among the people, so that they will be as strong as "David," the mighty warrior. The Davidic rulers will also receive supernatural strength and will be "like God," as "the angel of the LORD" who was going "before (in front of) them" (cf. Exod. 14:19; 23:20; 32:34; 33:2, 14-15, 22; 1 Sam. 29:9; 2 Sam. 14:17, 20; 19:27).

". . . we place the entire passage in the time of the Great Tribulation and more specifically in the Battle of Armageddon, when the nations of the earth will make their last frantic effort to blot Israel out of existence, only to be met by the most crushing defeat at the hands of the Lord of hosts Himself." (Charles L. Feinberg, *God Remembers: A Study of the Book of Zechariah*, p. 228)

10 - The Lord also promised to "pour out on" the Davidic rulers and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, representing all the Israelites, a spirit of remorse. "Grace" will be the motive for this outpouring, and "supplication" to God (for what the Jews had done to their Messiah) will be the result. This God-given conviction will cause them to "mourn" when they look (in faith) to Him (better than *on* Him) "whom they" had formerly "pierced" (i.e., slain; cf. Num. 21:9; Isa. 45:22; 53:5; John 3:14-15; 19:34). They will mourn as one mourns over the death of one's only (beloved, cf. Gen. 22:2; Jer. 6:26; Amos 8:10) son or his or her firstborn son.

The Jews will do this, either just before the Messiah returns to the earth, or when He returns to the earth (cf. Isa. 27:9; 59:20-21; Jer. 31:31-37; Amos 9:11-15; Rom. 11:25-27; Rev. 1:7). The "spirit" in view will be a result of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who conveys *grace* (compassion; cf. Heb. 10:29) and calls forth *supplication* (prayer; cf. Isa. 32:15; 44:3; 59:20-21; Jer. 31:31, 33; Ezek. 36:26-27; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29). The coming of the messianic kingdom is contingent on Israel's repentance, God's sovereign control, and the Spirit's enabling grace.

The unusual combination "they will look to *Me* whom they have pierced" and "they will mourn for *Him*" suggests two different individuals, but the deity of the Messiah solves this problem. Yahweh Himself would suffer for the people in the person of Messiah. The suffering could be figurative (they wounded His holiness) or substitutionary (He died in place of others). Other references to this text point to a substitute suffering (e.g., John 19:37; Rev. 1:7; cf. Isa. 53:5, 8).

13:1 - "In that day (when they mourn and repent)," God will

open "a fountain" for the complete spiritual cleansing of the Israelites, both for their moral sins and for their ritual uncleanness (cf. Ezek. 47). The figure of a fountain pictures abundant cleansing that will continue indefinitely. This will be the fulfillment of God's promise to forgive the sins of His people Israel in the New Covenant (3:4, 9; Jer. 31:34; Ezek. 36:25; cf. Rom. 11:26-27). "The blood of Jesus . . . cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). The cleansing is available now, but God will cleanse multitudes of Israelites in the future, after they turn to their Messiah in faith (12:10-14).

2 - At that time the Lord also promised to remove idolatry, false prophets, and unclean spirits from the land. There will be external cleansing as well as internal. The Jews will "no longer ascribe supernatural powers to mere things, nor worship them as divine" (cf. 10:2-3; Jer. 23:30-32; 27:9-10; Ezek. 13:1—14:11). False prophets, as is clear from the context, will not mislead the people (cf. Matt. 24:4-5, 11, 15, 23-24; 2 Thess. 2:2-4; Rev. 9:20; 13:4-15). The unclean spirits are the diviners, mediums, and demons who confused and afflicted the people in the past.

7 – Zechariah returns to the theme of the Shepherd and his scattered sheep back in chapter 11. Almighty Yahweh personified a sword, the instrument of violent death. Addressing it as "O sword," He commanded it to execute ("strike") His "Shepherd," the royal Good Shepherd of 11:4-14. Yahweh further described this Shepherd as the Man who was very close to Him—even as "My Associate." In 11:17 it was the worthless shepherd whom the Lord would strike, but here it is the Good Shepherd. The One doing the striking is evidently God Himself, since "strike" is masculine in the Hebrew text, and agrees with "the LORD of hosts." If so, Zechariah pre-

sented Messiah's death as God's activity (cf. Isa. 53:10; Acts 2:23) as well as Israel's (12:10-14).

The striking (death) of the Shepherd would result in the scattering of the Shepherd's sheep (i.e., Israel, 11:4-14). The Lord Jesus quoted this part of the verse, claiming the role of the Shepherd, when He anticipated the scattering of His disciples following His death (cf. Matt. 26:31, 56; Mark 14:27, 50). The last line of the verse is capable of two different interpretations, both of which came to pass. Perhaps a double entendre was intended. God Himself would scatter even the young sheep and would extend mercy to them (cf. Mark 13:19, 24; Luke 2:35; Rev. 11:3-10).

8-9 - The scattering of the sheep would result in two-thirds of the flock dying, and one-third remaining alive. The Lord will "refine" the surviving one-third in the fires of affliction (cf. 3:2; Ezek. 5:1-12). This remnant must be the same group of Israelites, described in 12:10—13:1, who will turn to God in repentance. Evidently two-thirds of the Jews, the unbelieving, will perish during the Tribulation, and one-third will live through it and enter the Millennium. This surviving remnant, therefore, must include the 144,000 Israelite witnesses of Revelation 7:1-8 and 14:1-5. The one-third will call on the Lord's name in supplication for forgiveness (12:10). The Lord will respond to their cry by reaffirming His New Covenant relationship with them, and they will agree to it (cf. Ezek. 20:37).

**GOING  
FURTHER**

*One thing we can do to train ourselves to remember, is to memorize a part of what our Father has said to us. The Holy Spirit can use this to change our thinking so that our "heads" are more like Jesus. This week, memorize Zech 13:9.*