

Verse 10 plays an important role in this burden and is highlighted in the New Testament in relation to Jesus Christ. Consequently, this verse tends to overshadow the larger context with the result that it is often effectively isolated from it. One outcome of this is that readers (and commentators) can easily miss what is one of the most profound and important aspects of this second burden, namely its conjunction of the concepts of absolute triumph and abject, bitter mourning. Yes, Zechariah's announcement of Yahweh's piercing at the hand of Israel is hugely significant and the gospel writers duly noted it, but this revelation is situated within a larger prophetic context. The word of the Lord's piercing is part of a broader prophetic "word," such that the part is conditioned (in meaning and importance) by the whole, even as the whole is conditioned by the part. One cannot truly grasp the significance of 12:10 except in relation to the surrounding burden, which itself is dependent upon the contribution of this particular verse.

Focusing on verse 12:10 can cause the reader to miss the burden's juxtaposition of the ideas of triumph and mourning, but merely taking note of this phenomenon isn't enough; in fact, it can lead to further confusion. For considered in isolation, triumph and lamentation appear antithetical, and yet Zechariah's burden assigns them to the same persons in relation to the same situational context ("in that day"): *The Lord was going to arise and deliver the children of David's house and kingdom in a complete and glorious triumph (12:1-9), yet their deliverance would provoke anguished mourning rather than exultation (12:11-14)*. At face value this makes no sense, but it does when the entire chapter is considered as a whole.

Though not fully explained, the burden revealed that Yahweh was going to bring victory and deliverance to David's house by putting the sword into their hands so that they should pierce Him with it. But afterward He was going to illumine their minds by His Spirit to the reality of their triumph and the shocking way it had come about, so that they would celebrate their victory with bitter grief and lamentation.

- d. Verse 10 is the hinge that unites and reconciles the triumphal deliverance of David's house which opens the second burden (12:1-9) and the mourning of that same house which is the subject of verses 11-14. The balance of chapter 12, then, accomplishes three primary purposes with respect to this mourning and its relation to the Lord's deliverance through His own piercing.

First of all, it elaborates on the mourners. To this point the burden identified them as the "house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." But subsequently it shows that they include all Israel: *the mourning of David's house and the inhabitants of Jerusalem would be shared by all of Israel's families*. This dynamic implies three things: First, the *same Spirit* who provoked the mourning of David's house and Jerusalem would be poured out on all the families of Israel; second, sharing in the mourning of Judah and Jerusalem means sharing their *same guilt*; lastly, sharing all of these things shows that the families of Israel are here *reckoned together* with David's house and the people of Jerusalem. This is consistent with the context (12:1) and the overall prophetic witness.

Related to the previous observations, the balance of chapter 12 also highlights the comprehensiveness and distinctiveness of this mourning. This passage repeatedly emphasizes that every family in Israel will mourn over Yahweh's piercing, *but as individual persons* (note the repeated phrase, "their wives by themselves"). There was to be no discrimination *among* Israel's families, but also none *within* each family. Men and women alike – but each person individually – were going to participate in this mourning which would fill the land of Israel.

As noted, the passage highlights this individual mourning by repeatedly identifying the *wives* as mourning by themselves. It may appear odd that they are singled out, but the likely reason is that Hebrew wives (and their children) were characteristically treated as an extension of the husband/father. By explicitly delineating them, the prophecy highlighted the individuality of this mourning phenomenon. And if each person was going to mourn as an individual, it meant that the Lord was going to pour out His Spirit on each person individually – male and female. *As each individual shared in Yahweh's piercing, so each would share individually in His deliverance and His Spirit* (cf. Joel 2:28-29).

- e. And just as the burden specifically identified as mourners the wives of the households of Israel, so it identified by name the houses of David, Nathan, Levi and Shimei. Not surprisingly, there is no consensus regarding the significance of Zechariah spotlighting these four men and their households, but a few observations can be made which find wide agreement:
- 1) The first is the obvious connotation of Israel's *kingship* and *priesthood* associated with David and Levi respectively. This fits well with the contextual emphasis on all *Israel* and all of its families participating in this mourning event. For, while certain individuals of the tribes of Judah and Levi were set apart as Israel's kings and priests, *Israel as a whole* was a regal and priestly community as the Lord's elect "son" (cf. Exodus 4:22-23 with 19:1-6). This imagery reflected and also illumined Israel's fundamental identity as the "seed of Abraham": By covenant grant, Abraham was to be the father of a *royal* people – a people who would fulfill man's creational mandate to exercise God's rule over His creation as His image-son. But man's royal role couldn't be fulfilled until he was restored to His Creator/Father, and this required that the knowledge of God be mediated to the world of men existing in alienation from Him. So it was that Abraham and his covenant offspring were called to be *priests* as well as rulers. The Abrahamic "seed" was corporatized in the nation of Israel, and hence the designation of Israel as a kingdom of priests.
 - 2) The houses of David and Levi signified the regal and priestly aspects of Israel, but the burden also set these men in parallel with two others: *Nathan* with David and *Shimei* with Levi (12:12-13). This suggests that this "Nathan" is David's son (2 Samuel 5:13-14; cf. Luke 3:31), and so also "Shimei" is Levi's grandson (Exodus 6:16-17; cf. Numbers 3:17-21).

This conclusion is further supported by the explicit messianic typology of Zerubbabel in Zechariah's prophecy (4:1-10; cf. Haggai 1-2), Zerubbabel being a son of David through Nathan (Luke 3:23-31). Zerubbabel was not of David's royal line (which descended from Solomon), but he ruled over the Jews during the exilic period after David's royal line had been severed. Indeed Zerubbabel was the ancestor of *Jesus*, the Son of David who, not being part of the cursed line of Solomon, could assume David's throne by being grafted into David's royal line by adoption through Joseph.

- 3) Finally, the circumstances of Jesus' crucifixion and its aftermath echoed this apparent emphasis on Judah's rulers and priests, for they were the focal point in Israel's historical guilt, culminating with the piercing of Yahweh's Servant (cf. Matthew 27:15-25 with Acts 2:36, 4:1-28, 7:51-53; etc.). So also Jerusalem and the house of David were the epicenter of Israel's subsequent mourning and repentance (Acts 2).

Taken together, these observations reinforce the conclusion that "Israel" is here being conceived as the Lord's covenant house: a people bound to Him by covenant as the children of Abraham and therefore designated a kingdom of rulers and priests called to fulfill both Abraham's mandate and the one first entrusted to Adam. Thus this corporate mourning was to involve, not the Israelite nation in its totality, but Abraham's covenant children – the "Israel" that comprises David's house and kingdom; the "Israel" that is *Israel indeed*. And so this comprehensive mourning (and the repentance it reflects) must be interpreted *qualitatively* rather than quantitatively. It would implicate all of the families of Israel, but not every individual Israelite (cf. Matthew 3:5; Mark 1:5; Luke 3:21; also Luke 2:25-35).

- f. The last thing to consider from chapter 12 is the declaration in verse 11 that Israel's mourning will be like "*the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo*." This is the third statement describing Israel's future mourning, and though it follows immediately upon the other two, it is worthy of being considered separately in its own right. The reason is that it is especially pregnant and profoundly significant since it points to a critical moment in Israel's history and the Lord's outworking of His purposes through Israel.

It's noteworthy that the burden didn't identify the circumstance of this particular mourning, and the reason is that Zechariah's hearers knew exactly what he was referring to: His reference was to a time of national mourning in view of the death of King Josiah. Josiah was a king of Judah during the era of the divided kingdom (*Israel* in the north and *Judah* in the south). He was a son of David and ruled Judah as the remnant of David's kingdom from David's throne in Jerusalem. *Thus Judah's mourning over Josiah's death was the mourning of David's regal son – put to death by piercing – by the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.* This close parallel with the mourning described in the burden is sufficient to justify the comparison, but the actual correlation and its significance run much deeper, implicating Josiah's reign and the reason he was mourned in this way.

Josiah's place in the salvation history was introduced long before his birth. He came into view in connection with the division of David's kingdom – specifically in relation to the apostasy of Israel's northern ten tribes under Jeroboam I and the reduction of David's kingdom (Yahweh's kingdom) to Judah (consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin). As far as the Lord was concerned, Jeroboam's kingdom was an apostate entity outside His covenant; Yahweh's kingdom – the kingdom He promised to Abraham and saw realized under David – was now confined to the two-tribe kingdom of Judah (cf. 1 Kings 12:16). Though greatly diminished, the Lord's covenant kingdom continued on with David's regal sons sitting on his throne – which was Yahweh's throne – in Jerusalem.

Josiah entered the picture at the very point of the division of the Israelite kingdom. Yahweh had determined to punish David's unfaithfulness as His elect son-king by bringing the sword upon his house (his kingdom as well as his family). Thus David's kingdom was sliced in two during the reign of his grandson Rehoboam, and God gave ten of the tribes of Israel to Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:1-24, cf. 11:14-40). Jeroboam knew that he ruled by the Lord's decree, and yet he immediately departed from Him by devising a new system of worship and initiating the apostasy of his newly-formed kingdom (1 Kings 12:25-33).

This was the historical context for Josiah's introduction, and it came in connection with a divinely-directed encounter between a prophet of Judah and Jeroboam and one of Israel's prophets (1 Kings 13). Yahweh dispatched this prophet to Jeroboam, whom he found standing by the altar at Bethel. This altar symbolized Jeroboam's apostasy, and the text heightens this impression of apostasy by noting that Jeroboam was present at the altar in order to burn incense there (13:1). By this action he was violating God's prescribed division between the kingship and the priesthood. He had severely judged Saul and Uzziah for attempting to function as a priest-king, and Jeroboam was now repeating their sin.

And so, when he found Jeroboam at the altar, the "man of God" pronounced Yahweh's curse against the altar and, by implication, against Jeroboam and his apostate kingdom. The Lord made it clear through His prophet that He had rejected Israel and its king, but Jeroboam's response shows that he refused this verdict. He regarded his kingdom as part of Yahweh's covenant kingdom and he fully expected the Lord's continued blessing. (Perhaps this expectation was reinforced by God's healing of Jeroboam's hand after He'd caused it to shrivel.) And so the encounter concluded with Jeroboam seeking a "fellowship meal" with the prophet, which he immediately rejected. But afterward one of Israel's prophets pursued the same request and the "man of God" relented.

The story didn't end there, and much more needs to be said regarding its role in the unfolding salvation history. But, in terms of Zechariah's burden, what must be noted is that the Lord's judgment against apostate Israel had its focal point in a son within David's house who would triumph over Israel's apostasy, killing her priests and defiling her altar by burning human bones on it (13:2-3).

And the son of David who would perform this judging and purging work against Israel was *Josiah*. Three hundred years later, Josiah became king in Judah and he did exactly what was prophesied of him as part of his comprehensive work of purging and reform (ref. 2 Kings 22:1-23:25; cf. 2 Chronicles 34-35). Josiah's reforms (provoked by the Lord's *Torah*) saw the people of Judah recommitting themselves to Yahweh and His covenant (23:1-3); but even so, He could not be dissuaded from His decision that Judah would follow Israel into exile and captivity (ref. 2 Kings 22:8-20, 23:21-27). Nevertheless, Josiah was recognized in Judah – and commemorated in Israel's scriptures – as one of Judah's greatest and most faithful kings – *a true son of David as a man after the Lord's own heart and so a faithful, devoted shepherd of His flock* (2 Kings 23:25). Like his forefather David, Josiah contributed significantly to the developing messianic portrait; with respect to Zechariah's burden – and by means of the issue of Israel's mourning, Josiah was set alongside the imagery of an only-begotten, first-born son, thereby framing that image in terms of *Davidic, regal sonship*: uniqueness and preeminent status related to being a true son of David and so a true son of Yahweh.

But for all of his greatness as a faithful shepherd of Yahweh's flock, the circumstance of Josiah's death shows that he was a flawed man (2 Chronicles 35:20-24). Josiah was a man who listened to the Lord, but not always; he followed the Lord passionately with a whole heart (2 Kings 23:25), but still fell short. For he was determined to engage Pharaoh Neco in battle, even though the Egyptian ruler sought to dissuade him. The Chronicles account emphasizes that this action was in disregard of the Lord's words, and it seems that Josiah's "tin ear" in this matter resulted from his sense that this was his opportunity to secure his kingdom. Assyria was in steep decline, and if he could defeat the armies of Egypt, there would be no significant threats to his throne and kingdom. But, the Lord had already declared that Judah was destined for destruction and exile, so that Josiah's design contradicted the divine word. This godly king turned away from Yahweh's words, and the result was that he incurred the sentence of death. *In this way his own circumstance echoed that of Judah and David's royal house*: He embodied Judah's unbelief (even in the context of its reform) and his death presaged what lay ahead for David's house and kingdom. (The same sort of prophetic representation had marked Hezekiah's life; ref. Isaiah 38-39). After his death the prophet Jeremiah composed a lamentation commemorating Josiah and it was chanted by all the people of Judah and Jerusalem. And not merely on the occasion of Josiah's death, but as a "statute" – an instituted rite of mourning – to be observed thereafter, probably as an annual commemoration on the date of Josiah's death (2 Chronicles 35:24-25).

Zechariah's burden foretold a future day of mourning in Israel. The burden attributed this mourning to the people's guilt in piercing Yahweh *and associated it with the day of their deliverance*. This is crucial, for it argues against the notion that this prophecy is yet unfulfilled. For it was at Calvary that God was pierced in His Servant, and there He triumphed over the enemies of His people and kingdom. So also, it was in that day of triumph that He poured out His Spirit and mourning came to Israel (Luke 23:48; Acts 2).