

Zechariah 13:1–9

The Open Fountain, the Pierced Shepherd, and a Refined People

Zechariah 13 continues the theme introduced in the previous chapter with that repeated phrase, “In that day.” It points ahead to a time when God will act decisively to cleanse, purify, and restore. This chapter centers on three big ideas:

- A fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.
- The removal of idolatry and false prophecy.
- The wounding of the Shepherd and the refining of the remnant.

All of it points us to Jesus Christ, the One who was pierced for us, and to the work that God still intends to do in His people.

1. The Fountain Opened for Sin (Zechariah 13:1)

In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David
and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
for sin and for uncleanness. (Zechariah 13:1)

“In that day,” God says, a fountain will be opened—a constant, flowing source of cleansing “for sin and for uncleanness.”

This is not just ritual purification. It is moral and spiritual cleansing that reaches the heart. The “house of David” and the “inhabitants of Jerusalem” are singled out, but the New Testament makes it clear that the cleansing secured in Jesus Christ is offered to all who will believe, Jew and Gentile alike.

When we hear about a fountain opened for sin, our minds go naturally to the cross:

- Jesus shed His blood for our sins.
- His sacrifice provides full and final atonement.
- There is cleansing for guilt, shame, and defilement.

Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross.

He did not die as a mere martyr or example. He died as the Lamb of God, bearing our sins in His body.

The resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

Because He rose from the dead, the fountain of cleansing is not a poetic image; it is a living reality for everyone who comes to Him in faith.

2. The End of Idols and False Prophets (Zechariah 13:2–6)

“It shall be in that day,” says the Lord of hosts,
“that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land,
and they shall no longer be remembered.

I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit
to depart from the land.

It shall come to pass
that if anyone still prophesies,
then his father and mother who begot him will say to him,
'You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the Lord.'
And his father and mother who begot him
shall thrust him through when he prophesies.

And it shall be in that day
that every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies;
they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive.
But he will say, 'I am no prophet,
I am a farmer; for a man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.'

And one will say to him,
'What are these wounds between your arms?'
Then he will answer,
'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.' (Zechariah 13:2–6)

God promises a time when:

- Idolatry is cut off. The very *names* of the idols are removed.
- False prophetic voices are silenced.
- The “unclean spirit” is driven out.

The picture is of a land so renewed by God that lying spiritual leadership is no longer tolerated. Former pretenders, who once dressed in rough garments to appear prophetic, will deny having any spiritual office at all. They will prefer to be known as ordinary workers rather than face the shame of being exposed as frauds.

We live in a world where idolatry often looks respectable and religious:

- People can idolize money, status, buildings, memories, “holy places,” or religious objects.
- People can cling to religious traditions, relics, or personalities as if they themselves were the source of spiritual life.

But God says He is going to **cut off** idols and false spiritual pretenders. His people do not ultimately need holy sites, special objects, or impressive personalities. They need **the living God**, who cleanses hearts and speaks truth.

“What are these wounds?”

Verse 6 then moves to a haunting question:

“What are these wounds between your arms?”
Then he will answer,
“Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.”

There is debate over whether this line continues the description of false prophets or shifts back to the One who was pierced in Zechariah 12. The very next verse clearly speaks about the Shepherd whom God Himself identifies as “My Shepherd” and “the Man who is My Companion.”

Taken in that flow, many see verse 6 as foreshadowing Jesus Christ, who was wounded by those who should have received Him—His own people, His own friends. He came to His own, and many did not receive Him. He was betrayed, denied, and rejected.

One day, when God pours out the Spirit of grace and supplication, people will see His wounds and understand what they mean: they are the marks of love, borne for us.

3. The Struck Shepherd and the Scattered Flock (Zechariah 13:7)

“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd,
against the Man who is My Companion,”
says the Lord of hosts.
“Strike the Shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered;
then I will turn My hand against the little ones.” (Zechariah 13:7)

This verse is explicitly applied to Jesus in the New Testament. On the night of His arrest, He quoted this passage to His disciples, knowing they would flee when He was taken.

Notice the language God uses:

- “My Shepherd” – God’s own appointed leader, the true Shepherd of the flock.
- “The Man who is My Companion” – a description of unique closeness and unity between the Lord and this Shepherd.

The “sword” is called to awake against Him. This reminds us that the cross was not an accident or a mere human miscarriage of justice. God allowed His own Shepherd to be struck. Jesus willingly went to the cross in obedience to the Father’s will, to accomplish our redemption.

When the Shepherd was struck:

- The disciples scattered.
- Fear, confusion, and failure surfaced.

Yet the story did not end there. The risen Shepherd restored His frightened followers. The One who was smitten became the One who gathers the flock again.

4. The Refining of the Remnant (Zechariah 13:8–9)

“And it shall come to pass in all the land,” says the Lord,
“that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die,
but one-third shall be left in it:

I will bring the one-third through the fire,
will refine them as silver is refined,
and test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
and I will answer them.
I will say, ‘This is My people’;
and each one will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’” (Zechariah 13:8–9)

These are sobering verses. They speak of:

- Severe loss and judgment (“two-thirds...cut off and die”).
- A refining fire for the remaining third.
- A restored relationship between God and His people.

However we understand the timing and exact historical fulfillment, the principle is clear:

- God allows His people to go through intense trials.
- These trials are not meant to destroy them, but to refine them.
- The result is a deeper, more genuine relationship.

The remnant:

- Calls on God’s name – true prayer, true dependence.
- Is answered – God hears and responds.
- Hears God say, “This is My people.”
- Responds, “The Lord is my God.”

This is covenant language renewed. After the cross, after scattering, after fire, God still brings a people to Himself who truly belong to Him and know Him.

Practical Application

1. **There is a real fountain of cleansing for your sin.**

You do not have to live under guilt, shame, or spiritual uncleanness. Jesus shed His blood for you. If you come to Him in repentance and faith, there is cleansing that goes deeper than any outward ritual.

2. **Beware of subtle idols and religious substitutes.**

Idols today may not be carved images. They might be:

- Religious traditions you cling to more tightly than to Jesus.
- Objects, places, or memories you treat as if they carry spiritual power in themselves.
- Status, money, success, or comfort that quietly takes the central place in your heart.

God intends to cut off idols. Ask Him to show you anything that has begun to compete with Him in your heart.

3. Let God's refining work do its full work in you.

Trials are painful. The "fire" is real. But God's purpose in the fire is not to crush you, but to refine you—like silver and gold. That means:

- Let hardship drive you *toward* God, not away from Him.
- Let difficulty strip away false hopes and expose what you really trust in.
- Let suffering deepen your prayer life rather than silence it.

The promise is: "They will call on My name, and I will answer them."

A Challenge for Believers

- Are you living as if the fountain has truly been opened for you?
Or do you still carry old guilt that Jesus has already paid for?
- Are there "small" idols that you tolerate?
A cherished habit, a hidden sin, a subtle form of pride, a dependence on religious props rather than on the living Christ?
- When you go through trials, do you see them as random misfortune, or as a refining fire that God can use to purify your faith?

Ask God to make this your heart position:

"You are my God. I am Your person. Whatever fire You use, do not let me waste it. Refine me, not just my circumstances. Make me more like Jesus."

An Invitation to Non-Believers

Zechariah speaks of a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. That fountain is not a place; it is a Person.

Jesus Christ, the true Shepherd, was struck.
He was wounded in the house of His friends.
He was pierced for our transgressions.

Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross.

At the cross, He took the judgment that our sins deserve.
He died in our place so that we could be forgiven, cleansed, and reconciled to God.

On the third day, God raised Him from the dead.

The resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

You cannot cleanse your own heart.

You cannot redeem yourself by good works, religion, or self-improvement.

But you *can* come to the fountain that God has opened.

If you sense God drawing you, you can respond right now:

- Admit before God that you are a sinner who needs cleansing.
- Believe that Jesus died for your sins and rose again.
- Call on His name, asking Him to forgive you, cleanse you, and be Lord of your life.

God's promise is:

"They will call on My name, and I will answer them.

I will say, 'This is My people';

and each one will say, 'The Lord is my God.'"

Today can be the day you begin to say from your heart, "The Lord is my God," because you have come to the One who was pierced for you and who lives to save you.