

Post-Exile Prophets
THROUGH THE FIRE
Thursday, September 18
Reading: Zechariah 13:8-9

Zechariah 13:9 *"This third I will put 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.' "*

Zechariah has moved from the cleansing of Israel (13:1-6) to the Source of the cleansing, the death of the Shepherd Messiah (13:7). He now describes the means of their cleansing. In reading the prophet's description of this final war, it might be easy to think of it as Israel's final judgment. But it is also Israel's ultimate salvation.

"That day" will be a time of terrible judgment. Of that day, the prophet Jeremiah said, "Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it" (Jeremiah 30:7).

The Lord uses this time of trouble to purge His people. Two-thirds will not survive, but the rest will repent and be saved. God says, "This third I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold" (13:9). The prophet Malachi, who was a contemporary of Zechariah, states the same thing:

But who can endure the day of His coming? Who can stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; He will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness (Malachi 3:2-3).

The result of God's fiery purge is that those who survive will "call on My name" and say, "The LORD is our God." They will see the One they have pierced and cry out to their True Messiah in repentance. And God will accept them and say, "They are My people." This has been God's desire since the beginning of creation – to dwell with His people. As John closes out His spectacular vision of Revelation, he records:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God (Revelation 21:3).

God often speaks of refining and proving His people through the fire. The New Testament says the same for believers today.

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your soul (1 Peter 1:6-9)

Like the refiner's fire burns away the impurities in silver and gold, so God uses suffering and trials to purify us into the image of Christ. Are you going through a hard time? You can rejoice in the fact that God is making you more like Jesus.