Fulfilled Prophecies

Zechariah 13:6: Who Is The Wounded Man In The House Of His Friends?

By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† Zechariah 13:6 is sometimes quoted as though it were a direct prophecy about the wounds of Jesus at the crucifixion. However, the immediate context tells us who the wounded man is. Zechariah is describing the removal of idols, false prophets, and the unclean spirit from the land.

† We can't isolate verse 6 from verses 2-5 and then assign the

wounded man a completely different identity. The man in verse 6 belongs to the same discussion about false prophecy that begins in verse 2.
† The key is to let Scripture interpret Scripture. Zechariah describes a false prophet who becomes ashamed of his prophetic claims, denies being a prophet, and is questioned about the wounds on his body.
† This passage isn't describing the wounds of Christ from the cross. It's describing the disgrace and exposure of false prophecy during the covenant judgment and cleansing associated with that generation.

Zechariah 13:2
"And it will come about on that day," declares the Lord of armies, "that I will eliminate the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered; and I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land.
† The context begins with God's promise to remove idols, prophets, and the unclean spirit from the land. Everything that follows must be read within that setting.
† Zechariah repeatedly uses in that day for events connected with Jerusalem and the coming messianic age. The prophecy isn't suddenly changing subjects in verse 6 without telling us.
† Jesus later warned that false prophets would arise before Jerusalem's judgment, showing that false prophecy remained an important issue during that generation (Matthew 24:11, 24).

Zechariah 13:3
And if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who gave birth to him will say to him, 'You shall not live, because you have spoken falsely in the name of the Lord'; and his father and mother who gave birth to him shall pierce him through when he prophesies.
† Zechariah now describes the severity with which false prophecy would be rejected. The subject is still false prophets, not the Messiah.
† This language reflects the covenant law given to Israel concerning someone who attempted to lead God's people away

from Him through false religious claims (Deuteronomy 13:1-5).
† The passage presents false prophecy as something shameful and deserving judgment. That prepares us for verses 4-6, where the false prophet tries to conceal what he has been.

Zechariah 13:4
Also it will come about on that day that the prophets will each be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies, and they will not put on a hairy robe in order to deceive;
† Verse 4 couldn't be clearer about the identity of the people under discussion. These prophets are ashamed because their visions are false.
† Their prophetic clothing had helped identify them as prophets, but now they wouldn't want that identification because their deception had been exposed.
† This isn't a description of Jesus. Jesus wasn't ashamed of a false vision, He didn't prophesy falsely, and He didn't disguise Himself because His prophetic claims had failed.

Zechariah 13:5
but he will say, 'I am not a prophet; I am a cultivator of the ground, because a man sold me as a slave in my youth.'
† The same individual now denies being a prophet. He claims instead that he's a worker of the ground.
† Notice the progression. The prophets are removed, the false prophet becomes ashamed, he abandons the appearance of a prophet, and finally he denies that he was ever a prophet.
† This makes the identity of the wounded man in the next verse much easier to understand. Verse 6 continues the same conversation about this disgraced prophet.

Zechariah 13:6
And someone will say to him, 'What are these wounds between your arms?' Then he will say, 'Those with which I was wounded at the house of my friends.'
† The question is asked of the man who has just said, I am no prophet. There isn't any indication that Zechariah has suddenly

changed the subject to Jesus.
† The wounds expose something about this man's former religious activity. Self-inflicted cutting was associated with pagan prophetic practices in Scripture, as seen when the prophets of Baal cut themselves during their confrontation with Elijah (1 Kings 18:28).
† The phrase house of my friends describes the setting in which he received the wounds. In context, his answer is part of his attempt to explain the marks found on his body after denying that he's a prophet.
† Jesus was wounded by His enemies at the crucifixion. Zechariah 13:6 describes a man who has just denied being a prophet after false prophets have become ashamed of their visions. The immediate context shouldn't be ignored.

1 Kings 18:28
So they cried out with a loud voice, and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until blood gushed out on them.
† Scripture itself gives us an example of false prophets deliberately cutting their bodies as part of pagan religious practice.
† This provides important biblical background for understanding why wounds could expose the previous religious activity of the man in Zechariah 13.
† We don't need to invent an explanation disconnected from Zechariah's context when Scripture already shows false prophets receiving wounds through pagan prophetic practices.

Matthew 24:11
And many false prophets will rise up and mislead many people.
† Jesus warned His disciples that many false prophets would appear during the events leading toward the judgment He described.
† False prophecy wasn't an insignificant first-century issue. Jesus specifically included it among the signs His disciples would encounter.
† Zechariah's prophecy concerning the removal of false prophecy therefore fits naturally within the first-century covenant transition

and judgment upon that generation (Matthew 24:34).

Matthew 24:24
For false christs and false prophets will arise and will provide great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.
† Jesus again emphasized the appearance of false prophets before the events of that generation reached their conclusion.
† Zechariah described false prophets becoming ashamed and their prophetic claims being removed. Jesus described false prophets operating during the closing period of the old covenant age.
† These passages work together without requiring Zechariah 13:6 to become a prediction of Jesus' crucifixion wounds.

Zechariah 12:10
And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of pleading, so that they will look at Me whom they pierced; and they will mourn for Him, like one mourning for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.
† Zechariah does contain a genuine prophecy connected with Christ being pierced. John directly applies this language to Jesus (John 19:37).
† This distinction is important. We don't deny that Zechariah prophesied about Christ's suffering. We recognize the passages where the New Testament itself makes that connection.
† Zechariah 12:10 concerns the pierced one and mourning. Zechariah 13:2-6 concerns the removal and disgrace of false prophets. Keeping each passage in its own context strengthens rather than weakens the messianic prophecies.

Historical References
† Jerome, writing in his Commentary on Zechariah, preserved discussion of Zechariah 13 within the larger prophetic context and recognized that the surrounding verses concern prophets, deception, and the removal of false prophetic activity.
† Cyril of Alexandria, in his commentary on the Minor Prophets, also treated Zechariah's surrounding prophecy within the themes of

purification, rejection of false worship, and God's work among His covenant people.
† Historical Christian interpretation hasn't been completely uniform concerning Zechariah 13:6. Some Christian interpreters have connected the wounds with Christ, while others have emphasized that verses 2-6 describe false prophets. The immediate grammatical and biblical context must determine our interpretation.
† Josephus recorded that the period surrounding Jerusalem's final years was filled with deceivers and false prophetic claims that contributed to the confusion among the people. His historical account provides useful background for Jesus' warnings concerning deceivers and false prophets before Jerusalem's destruction.

How It Applies To Us Today
† We should never build doctrine by removing one verse from the paragraph surrounding it. Context matters.
† Zechariah 13:6 demonstrates why we must read what comes before and after a verse instead of beginning with a traditional interpretation and forcing it into the text.
† We don't need to make Zechariah 13:6 about Jesus to defend His crucifixion. Scripture clearly tells us that Jesus was pierced and wounded, and Zechariah 12:10 is specifically connected with Him in the New Testament (John 19:37).
† Fulfilled prophecy becomes clearer when we allow the Bible to establish its own time statements, audience, context, and fulfillment.
† False prophecy belonged to the covenant world that was approaching judgment. Jesus warned His own disciples about false prophets before the end of that age, and Zechariah had already spoken of the removal of false prophetic activity.
† We live on this side of that completed covenant transition. Our faith rests in Jesus Christ and the completed revelation preserved for us in Scripture, not in people claiming new revelation from God.

Q & A Appendix
Q: Is Zechariah 13:6 a prophecy about the wounds Jesus received

on the cross?
A: The immediate context points to the false prophet described in Zechariah 13:2-5. The man questioned in verse 6 is the same man who has just denied being a prophet. Zechariah 12:10, however, is directly connected with Jesus being pierced in John 19:37.

Q: Why does the man have wounds?
A: The passage doesn't explicitly describe how every wound was produced, but Scripture shows that pagan prophets cut themselves as part of their religious practices (1 Kings 18:28). In context, the wounds expose the background of a man who is attempting to distance himself from prophecy.

Q: Why does he say he was wounded in the house of his friends?
A: His statement explains the wounds after he has denied being a prophet. Whatever specific circumstances produced those wounds, the surrounding verses identify him with the discussion of disgraced prophetic activity, not with a sudden change of subject to the crucifixion.

Q: Doesn't Zechariah prophesy about Jesus being pierced?
A: Yes. Zechariah 12:10 speaks of the one who was pierced, and John applies that Scripture to Jesus in John 19:37. Recognizing that fulfillment doesn't require us to make Zechariah 13:6 say the same thing.

Q: What does this passage teach us about interpreting prophecy?
A: It teaches us to respect context. We shouldn't isolate a single sentence from the verses surrounding it. Zechariah 13:2-6 develops one continuous discussion about removing false prophecy from the land.

Q: Was false prophecy important during the first century?
A: Yes. Jesus specifically warned His disciples that many false prophets would arise before the events He said would occur within that generation (Matthew 24:11, 24, 34).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Zechariah 13:2; Zechariah 13:3; Zechariah 13:4; Zechariah 13:5; Zechariah 13:6; 1 Kings 18:28; Matthew 24:11; Matthew 24:24; Zechariah 12:10

† Jerome, Commentary on Zechariah; Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Minor Prophets; Josephus, The Wars of the Jews

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