

Future Jerusalem

Zechariah 8

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Israel restored to God's favor – Zechariah 8:1-17

Again the word of the Lord of hosts came, saying, ² “Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; with great fervor I am zealous for her.’

³ “Thus says the Lord: ‘I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the Lord of hosts, The Holy Mountain.’ ⁴ “Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age.’ ⁵ The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.’ ⁶ “Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, will it also be marvelous in My eyes?’ says the Lord of hosts. ⁷ “Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Behold, I will save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; ⁸ I will bring them back, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. they shall be My people and I will be their God, in truth and righteousness.’

⁹ “Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Let your hands be strong, you who have been hearing in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, who spoke in the day the foundation was laid for the house of the Lord of hosts, that the temple might be built. ¹⁰ For before these days there were no wages for man nor any hire for beast; there was no peace from the enemy for whoever went out or came in; for I set all men, everyone, against his neighbor. ¹¹ But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,’ says the Lord of hosts.

¹² ‘For the seed shall be prosperous, the vine shall give its fruit, the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew—I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these. ¹³ And it shall come to pass that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you, and you shall be a blessing. Do not fear, let your hands be strong.’ ¹⁴ “For thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Just as I determined to punish you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘and I would not relent, ¹⁵ So again in these days I am determined to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear.

¹⁶ These are the things you shall do: Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace; ¹⁷ Let none of you think evil in your

heart against your neighbor; and do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate,’ says the Lord.”

v1-2 – What does the title, “*LORD of hosts*” tell us about God?

God introduces Himself with a title declaring His power and majesty. He is the LORD of hosts, "hosts" referring to the armies of heaven. The title itself is a wake-up call.

For what was God zealous?

The word for zealous in the ancient Hebrew comes from the idea "to become intensely red." It has the thought of a face becoming flushed with deep emotion. God is passionately concerned for His people.

Why would God be zealous for Zion?

Zion is a synonym for Jerusalem. This is the place God has promised to dwell with us for eternity starting with the Millennial Kingdom which foreshadows the Eternal State. Thus, Jerusalem is a holy place.

v3 – What does it mean, the Lord would *return to Zion*?

God's people and city (Jerusalem) will be transformed by the presence of the LORD.

When would Jerusalem experience the presence of the Lord and “*be called the City of Truth*”?

This has to refer to the Millennial Kingdom. The Shekinah Glory of God never did occupy the second temple and Jesus only visited Jerusalem during His first advent, He didn't live there.

v4-5 – What was significant about pointing out there would be young and old people in Jerusalem?

Young and old people are vulnerable. Because of the rigors of returning to Jerusalem, there were few young and old people in the city. But the LORD promises that all that will change one day and young and old will enjoy the city in safety.

- This was a significant promise because in Zechariah's time Jerusalem's walls were ruined and the city was not safe and secure for old people or for children playing in its streets.

Indeed, the Babylonians were ruthless not respecting the vulnerable young and old...

Lamentations 2:21 – *Young and old lie on the ground in the streets; My virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword; You have slain them in the day of Your anger, You have slaughtered and not pitied.*

This was as God said it would be:

Deut 28: 49-50 – *The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand, a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favor to the young.*

What does how a society treat the most vulnerable tell us about the Spiritual health of that society?

Leviticus 19:32 – *You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord.*

God hates taking advantage of the vulnerable, we should respect the aged and protect the young. Godless societies do not do that. It is clear what God must think of the American practice of killing the unborn...

Proverbs 6:16-17 – *These six things the Lord hates... hands that shed innocent blood...*

v6 – Why might the promise of Jerusalem being restored be marvelous to people in Zechariah's day?

The promise of a transformed, prosperous, safe Jerusalem seemed a little too fantastic to believe when the city was half-built and the walls wouldn't be completed for another 60 years.

- Just because it seemed too big in the eyes of man, it was not too marvelous for the LORD. As Jesus said, *"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* (Matthew 19:26)

v7 – What is this talking about regathering Israel from the East and West?

Proportionately, few among the exiles returned to the Promised Land. God promises a gathering from exile to come that will far surpass the present gathering.

- Return from the East: Babylon
- Return from the West: following the Diaspora, the worldwide dispersion that began in AD 70 mostly involved Jews coming from Western Civilization

v8 – What would happen to cause the relationship between Israel and God to be restored?

They shall be My people and I will be their God, in truth and righteousness: The regathering God promises will not just be geographic, but also a spiritual gathering. It won't just be that their address changes, but their heart also.

- This has to be referring to a regathering in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom when the Messiah returns.

- The first regathering (going on now) would restore Israel to part of the land, in unbelief, setting the stage for the Tribulation (divine discipline).
- The second, permanent regathering would restore Israel to all of the land, in faith setting the stage for the Millennial Kingdom (divine blessing).

v9-10 – Why should the hands of those rebuilding the temple be strong?

This encouraging command the temple builders who faced lack (no wages from man) and opposition (no peace from the enemy); God wanted them to find strength for the work in His promise.

What does verse 9 have to say about why we should study prophecy?

Studying prophecy impacts our actions in the here and now; it changes lives bringing us closer to God and begs the question: why invest so much in a world that will be burned up?

1 Peter 3:10 – *the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

It is much better to invest our time and resources in what God can use to help us lay-up treasure in heaven.

v10 – How had economic and political problems caused the building of the temple to be put on hold?

God saw that the priorities of the returning exiles were wrong and caused them to experience the consequences of that...

Haggai 1:4-6 – *Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins? Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes."*

v11 – How is it that God would "not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days"?

God allowed a period of difficulty but would not cause it to last forever. He would bring prosperity and blessing to the once afflicted nation.

v12 – How would God bless Israel?

God would make Israel prosperous again from an agricultural perspective using the language of the promised blessings of Deuteronomy 28.

v13 – When would Israel be a blessing to the nations?

This certainly has not been the case since they have been established as a nation in unbelief. So, it has to be during the Millennial Kingdom when the Lord resides in Jerusalem. See verse 23...

Zechariah 8:23 – In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

Why would God tell the returning exiles not to fear?

There was a lot to be fearful of in their times and situation... a lot like today.

- God tells us not to fear in His Word 365 times, enough for every day of the year.
- When you consider everything that could go wrong and harm us, it is amazing, and only be the grace of God, that things go as well as they do.
- Instilling fear is a tactic to control people the ruling authorities learned during COVID. Expect them to use this again during the next crisis they engineer.

v14-15 – How did God reinforce the certainty of His promise to bless Israel?

Just as I determined to punish you when your fathers provoked Me ... in these days I am determined to do good: God promises blessing to Israel instead of cursing, and He promises it on the principle of the Mosaic Covenant.

What is the principle we can apply from God’s promise of blessings for Israel when they obey?

God wants to bless us and He chastens those He loves to spur us back into a right relationship with Him...

Hebrews 12:6-8 – For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

Why does God repeat His admonition not to fear here?

Do not be an unbeliever; fear is a characteristic of unbelievers...

Proverbs 28:1 – The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion

Those who do not know and thus have no respect for God fear men and behave accordingly...

Revelation 21:8 – But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

It is significant that the cowardly are listed here first. Courage is a byproduct of knowing the Lord as Savior and not fearing what men could do to us...

Matthew 10:28 – do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

v16-17 – What did God say Israel should do to insure His blessings?

God promised blessing to an obedient Israel and cursing to a disobedient Israel (Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 28:15). If God will bless instead of curse they must fulfill their end of the Mosaic covenant, and gain blessing instead of curses.

Why is being truthful so important to God?

This is a characteristic of God and it honors Him when we are like him...

Hebrews 6: 18 – it is impossible for God to lie

Likewise, we should not make promises we don’t think we can keep...

Matthew 5:37 – let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

What does this passage have to say about judging others?

Our judgment of others should be done justly.

Where do we get the idea that Christians should not be judgmental?

Matthew 7:1-2 – Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged

This is where context is important... this is talking about not being hypocritical in our judgment of others. It also speaks to our speculation about the motive of others and goes on to pointing out that we should judge the fruit of the actions of others to identify the ravenous wolves among us.

- The ungodly make a practice of hypocritical judgment accusing others of the very thing of which they are guilty.

Can you think of any examples of the ungodly accusing others of what they are themselves guilty?

It is common to accuse political enemies of racism by people who advocate affirmative action. This says that there are races needing special help because they’re not qualified based on merit.

- Likewise, not requiring an ID to vote because certain races are not able to acquire an ID is condescending to those races.

How may we be people of peace?

As it says in verse 17, do not plot against one another in your heart...

Proverbs 4:23 – *Keep your heart with all diligence,
For out of it spring the issues of life.*

Private thoughts lead to public actions... Jesus warned of how our thoughts can be sinful equating anger with murder and lust with adultery in Matthew 5.

- The Ten Commandments lists “*do not covet*” which gives it significance as a heart sin that leads to other sins.

How can a God of love hate things?

God hates the things that separate people from Him... He hates the sin, not the sinner; a concept that unbelievers are unable to comprehend.

Feasting for fasting – Zechariah 8:18-23

¹⁸ *Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying,* ¹⁹ *“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh, And the fast of the tenth, shall be joy and gladness and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah. Therefore love truth and peace.’”* ²⁰ *“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Peoples shall yet come, inhabitants of many cities;’* ²¹ *The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, “Let us continue to go and pray before the Lord, and seek the Lord of hosts. I myself will go also.”* ²² *Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.’* ²³ *“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”’”*

v18-19 – How is it Israel’s fasts shall become joyous occasions?

Each one of these fast days remembered a tragic day around the fall of Jerusalem. God here promises blessing so wonderful that these mournful fasts will be transformed into cheerful feasts of celebration.

Psalm 30:11 – *You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness*

Turning our mourning into gladness is something God does for us... we should live our lives expecting this.

- And God would do this for Israel when they go back to their covenant with Him.

Why should the Jews love truth and peace?

In light of God's promised blessing, His people should want to be more like Him - they should love truth and peace.

v20-22 – When would tourism return to Jerusalem?

In Zechariah's day not many people wanted to come to a downtrodden city like Jerusalem. God promises a redemption so great that one day the peoples shall yet come to the glorified city.

Why would people of different nations gather in Jerusalem?

Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem: They would come to seek the favor of the Lord because that is where Jesus is. This promise will ultimately be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus. Jerusalem will be the headquarters of His kingdom, and the nations will come to seek the LORD in Jerusalem.

- This has been foreshadowed in our day (pre-Covid) when tourism is major characteristic of Israel.

v23 – When would people of the nations seek out Jews to learn about the Lord?

Ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man: This same word grasp is used for grabbing a snake by the tail (Exodus 4:4) or for grabbing a lion by its beard (1 Samuel 17:35). It means to grasp something that you can't afford to let go of.

Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you: When others see that God is with us, it attracts them to the LORD. When people see Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27), they want to come to Jesus.

Why is the promise to make Israel the most preeminent nation on earth important?

Deuteronomy 28:13 – *the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them.*

God is not done with Israel and must literally fulfill His promise to them if we can take literally His promises to us about eternal life. God's relationship with Israel is representative of His relationship with each of us as individuals.

What principles do we see from our discussion today?

- Not caring for the vulnerable reveals spiritual condition
- Studying prophecy changes us in the here & now
- Christians should never be fearful as unbelievers
- God wants to bless us & chastens those He loves
- Christians should be truthful because it honors God
- Christians should judge with just judgment
- Christians have peace when we guard our hearts
- God wants to turn our mourning into joy!
- We should have a sense of urgency as we see the stage being set for God working through Israel again