

Zechariah

Chapter 8

XIII. A Picture of True Religion - Part 2 - Zechariah 8

Zechariah chapter 8 continues with God's extended answer to the question from the delegation from Bethel found in Zechariah 7:3. What the delegation thought was a simple answer actually turns out to be a challenging question by God and a series of prophetic blessings pronounced on the nation of Israel. Chapter 7 contained God's challenging question, chapter 8 contains the prophetic blessings.

These prophetic blessings are best seen against the backdrop of God's judgment. Chapter 7 closes with God's statement as to why the Israelites have been scattered among the nations like a whirlwind scatters debris in its path. The reason was simply the fact that Israel had repeatedly ignored God's warnings regarding judgment for their sin. Instead of listening to God's prophets, they had made their heart like an adamant, or diamond, stone (Zechariah 7:12), instead of allowing God to put his yoke on them, they turned their shoulder and would have none of his correction (Zechariah 7:11), and instead of listening, they stopped up their ears (Zechariah 7:11). Because of this, God's judgment fell.

Now that the 70 years captivity had come to an end, God takes the time to reveal something of his future plan for Israel. This revelation is given in Zechariah 8 as a series of "thus saith the Lord" pronouncements. In fact, the best way to outline this chapter is to break in up into ten sections, each a specific promise by God regarding the future of Israel.

A. Number 1 - God is Jealous for his People - Zechariah 8:1-2

8:1 Again the word of the LORD of hosts came [to me], saying, 8:2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.

The first pronouncement God makes regarding his people is that he is very jealous for them. In fact, it was because of his jealousy that God finally had to punish Israel for their repeated idolatry.

That God is a jealous God is a recurrent theme in the Old Testament. As a result, it is a very important aspect of God that we need to understand. When we say that God is jealous, we mean that God desires to have an intimate relationship with man, a relationship that is threatened by anything that removes man's attention from God. We see this clearly in Exodus 20:5 where we see God commanding the Israelites to have no graven images. God knew that if he allowed images, then man would come up with a God to go along with that image. God so earnestly desires a pure and loving relationship with man that he reacts in jealous anger over anything that would intrude.

When Israel was told to possess the land, they were told to utterly destroy the nations before them. God did not do this because he was evil, he did this to judge the Canaanites who had stooped so low in their religion that they sacrificed their children to their Gods, and to also safeguard the Israelites from falling into the same idolatry. Unfortunately, Israel did not completely obey God. Because the

Canaanites survived, they became a source of idolatry to Israel. This idolatry ultimately led to the Babylonian captivity.

What these two verses actually say is that God desires a relationship with his people. It is this relationship that serves as a foundation for all of the other blessing mentioned in this chapter. One of the most awesome things for a Christian to comprehend is that God actually desires an intimate relationship with them.

Also, since God is a jealous God, he will react in holy wrath against anything that threatens his relationship with his people. Part of the prophetic promise found in verse 2 is that God is coming in fury against the nations who threaten Israel. Sometimes the reason God removes our "toys" is the fact that he desires a pure and unhindered relationship with his children. When our lives are filled up with a lot of worldly trash, it cannot be anything but a roadblock in our relationship with God. One of the greatest joys of heaven is that we will have unhindered fellowship with God.

B. Number 2 - God has Returned - Zechariah 8:3

8:3 Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.

The second prophetic pronouncement by God is found in verse 3, God has returned to his people. This verse is clearly an example of the "double fulfillment" aspect of Old Testament prophecy. Although it was true that God had returned in Zechariah's time, it is not true that He returned in the ultimate sense. There is yet coming a day when God will return to his people in person and be with him. It is in that day, that this prophecy will be completely fulfilled.

8:4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. 8:5 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. 8:6 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts. 8:7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; 8:8 And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness. 8:9 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which [were] in the day [that] the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built. 8:10 For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither [was there any] peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour. 8:11 But now I [will] not [be] unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts. 8:12 For the seed [shall be] prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these [things]. 8:13 And it shall come to pass, [that] as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, [but] let your hands be strong. 8:14 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: 8:15 So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not. 8:16 These [are] the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: 8:17 And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these [are things] that I hate,

saith the LORD. 8:18 And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying, 8:19 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth [month], and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace. 8:20 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; [It shall] yet [come to pass], that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: 8:21 And the inhabitants of one [city] shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. 8:22 Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. 8:23 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days [it shall come to pass], that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard [that] God [is] with you.