

May 10, 2020

“Promising Peace”
Lesson 2 of Unit

Zechariah 8:1-8, 11-17

Intro

Last week's study came from Zephaniah, who prophesied about 40 years before the Babylonian captivity in 586 BC. Today we look at a passage from Zechariah, a prophet of God speaking about 520 BC, nearly 20 years after Cyrus the Great decreed the Israelites could return to their land. So about 100 years have passed between the passage in Zephaniah last week and the one in Zechariah this week.

The concept of forgetting someone or being forgotten is key to today's passage. There are multiple Biblical passages where the writer asks not to be forgotten by God, and others where God rebukes the people for having forgotten Him. The task of reminding the people not to forget God was an important one for many of the OT prophets.

Read Zechariah 8:1-8

1. Frequently an OT prophecy begins with “The word of the Lord came to me”. What does the addition of the word “Almighty” (NIV) in vs. 1 add to this phrase, and what would it say to the returned exiles?
2. In vs 2a, the phrase from vs. 1 is repeated. The literal phrase is “Lord of hosts”. What aspect of God's character is being described by the use of this phrase? (Note: Zechariah likes this phrase “Lord of hosts”; he uses it over 50 times in his book.)
3. Read vs. 2b, then look up the definitions of “jealousy” and “zeal” or “zealous”. The Hebrew word translated in this verse as “jealousy” is translated as “zeal” in other Biblical passages (Is. 9:7, 37:32); the same with the Greek translations (see Phil. 3:6). What idea about God's character and view of His people is being described by the use of these words?
4. In vs. 3, when God says he “will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem”, where will He be besides in the lives of the people? What does His presence tell the Israelites about God's view of them now?

5. In vs. 4-5, what groups of people are occupying Jerusalem's streets? In terms of justice and security, what is significant about these two groups being there, and what they are doing?

6. What is it that may seem "marvelous" to the remnant? (Note that God finishes this thought with the rhetorical "Will it seem marvelous to me?", indicating that He is powerful enough to fulfill every promise He makes to His people.)

7. In vs. 7-8, what does God say He will do for His people? What is implied about the people's attitude/behavior toward God by the phrase "they will be my people"?

Read Zechariah 8:11-17

1. In vs. 11-12, God notes what was and what will be. What are the differences between these two situations for the remnant?

2. What is the reason Israel has been "a curse among the nations" in the past (vs. 13)? What does it say about God's character that He chooses to save them and make them a blessing?

3. Verses 14-15 present opposite aspects of how God has dealt / will deal with Israel. What other examples of this "two-fold" approach of God can we see in other Biblical stories? Is there any connection between these two verses and how God deals with us?

4. In vs. 16-17, what are the things God tells the people not to do? Which of the 10 Commandments do these things connect with?

Application: To make a relationship change in some positive way, someone in the relationship has to be the first to do something, to make the first move. God does that in this section of Zechariah, taking the steps needed to change Israel's relationship with Him. The galling thing is that the people of Israel were the ones at fault for a poor relationship with God. Yet God takes the first step to improve that broken and damaged relationship, out of His love for us and His determination to save us and claim us as His own. This is who He was in the past, and who He is now.

Prayer: Father God, thank you for the people in our lives who continually remind us of your love and goodness. Help us to reflect the qualities Zechariah points out, of loyalty, allegiance, and loving character. In all these and in all things, we wish to be more like you. In Jesus' name, Amen.