

Zech. 8:1 Again the word of the LORD of hosts came *to me*, saying,

Zech. 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.

Zech. 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.

Every other translation of the eight others I checked translate verse 2 in the present tense—"I am jealous...." I think the translators of the King James must have been influenced to contrast past and present due to the message of verse 3—"I am returned...." We know that Zion has been established in scripture as the place on earth where God has chosen to place His name **perpetually**.

1Kings 9:3 And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.

The Hebrew defines *jealous* as zealous, and Webster defines *jealous* as: "zealous; solicitous; vigilant; anxiously watchful." In other words, God is very interested in the well being of His land and its people. When you truly want the best for those you love, you are willing to inflict judgment to turn them from wicked, harmful practices. It's a principle that loving parents employ. God is a very attentive and faithful Father. His judgment did not mean that He had cast off His people forever. It was intended to result in restored fellowship, and it had. He was now declaring that He would return to Zion to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem and His people.

At this point I think the main thrust of the prophecy jumps much further into the future. Jerusalem has never been known as the "city of truth" since the captivity in Babylon. Although the temple was rebuilt and functional even through Jesus' lifetime, I'm not sure God would have described it as His *holy* mountain. This will, however, be true of Zion and the temple that are part of Messiah's millennial kingdom.

Zech. 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.

Zech. 8:5 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.

I don't think these verses are descriptive of Jerusalem in the times of Zechariah or since. It is, however, a part of the description of Jerusalem during the Messiah's Kingdom as prophesied by Isaiah.

Is. 65:18 But be ye glad and rejoice for ever *in that* which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

Is. 65:20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner *being* an hundred years old shall be accursed.

Jer. 30:19 And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.

Jer. 30:20 Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them.

Zech. 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.

This prophecy of a prosperous, peaceful and safe Jerusalem seemed almost impossible to these returned captives. To God, on the other hand, this is a sure word of prophecy. Nothing is too hard for God; He is the Creator and ultimate authority and power over His creation.

Zech. 8:7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country;

Zech. 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.

When the Lord talks about bringing His people home from east and west, He is making reference to the entire planet from the reference point of Jerusalem. The implication is that all the descendants of Jacob will be brought home to Israel, and He will dwell with them physically in Jerusalem. At that time, God will be joined to His people in truth and righteousness.

Again, I believe this is looking forward to the Messianic Kingdom. It's at that time that all the Jewish people will be brought home to Israel and will be established under the new covenant spoken of by Jeremiah.

Jer. 31:31-34 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

I believe this is the time referenced by Paul when ALL Israel will be saved and will never again rebel against God.

Rom. 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

Zech. 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.

Zech. 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.

The Lord is calling the people to pay attention to the prophet's message. He is encouraging them to stay strong and firm in their commitment to rebuild the temple, the house of the LORD. He is reminding them that before they began rebuilding His house, they were hurting for work, and there was nothing but worry and trouble all around them. Why? Because God had caused each one to be looking out for self at the expense of his neighbor.

This is one of the harder concepts for me to understand. God is sovereign and ever in control even though He has given us the freedom to make our own choices. He influences those choices for the good or bad according to His purposes. He influences those choices through intervening in the weather, or providing a great environment for the growth of disease-causing bacteria, or increasing the pressure inside the earth to produce earthquakes or volcanoes, or empowering our enemies by allowing them to prosper, or a million other ways that I can't name. The truth is that He is doing everything within His power short of force to cause us to turn to Him in faith and repentance and to get us to call out to Him for deliverance. I think the prophet Joel words it well:

Joel 2:11 And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp *is* very great: for *he is* strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

Joel 2:12 Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye *even* to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:

Joel 2:13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

Zech. 8:11 But now I *will not be* unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts.

Zech. 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*.

Zech. 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.

I believe this message is meant to encourage the people to whom Zechariah was ministering that God was again going to bless them as they obeyed Him. Again, however, I think the context points more toward the future millennial kingdom.

Throughout Israel's history they have had more sorrow than joy and more trouble than prosperity. When Messiah establishes His kingdom, Israel will truly become as numerous as the sands of the sea, the produce of the land will be abundant, and the nation will experience joy, prosperity and security as never before. Though they have always been cursed and despised among the nations, they will be blessed and desired among the nations.

“fear not, but let your hands be strong” – The first thing I thought of in association with this phrase was a verse from Galatians.

Gal. 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

And then the words of Joshua:

Josh. 1:9 ...Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God *is* with thee whithersoever thou goest.

The Lord is exhorting His people to have faith in Him and not get discouraged by the circumstances that may come their way. He is the covenant-keeping God of Israel. His word never fails; it will accomplish its purpose.

Is. 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

Zech. 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:

Zech. 8:15 So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.

Just as with the children of the wilderness generation whose parents were not allowed to enter the promised land, the Lord was giving Zechariah’s generation a fresh start in relationship to Him. Their fathers had provoked Him to wrath to the point that judgment was necessary. The Lord’s desire for this remnant generation is to bless them.

Zech. 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:

Zech. 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.

God is faithful to again instruct them as to how to live and reap His blessings. They should embrace the same truths that were proclaimed to their forefathers by the prophets.

- Always tell the truth.
- Exercise righteous judgment based on truth to promote peace.
- Do not think evil thoughts about or plan evil acts against your neighbor.
- Do not swear falsely.

God declares that these are things He hates. I couldn’t help but think of the following section in Proverbs.

Prov. 6:16-19 These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

I believe these verses in Zechariah address each of these things specifically except pride, and that is included since it is only through pride that we choose to disobey God in the first place.

Zech. 8:18 And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying,
Zech. 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.

According to the commentaries, these fasts were reminders of sad days in their history.

4th month on the 9th of Tammuz – Jerusalem’s walls were breached by Babylon.

5th month – The temple was destroyed.

7th month – Gedalia was murdered (cf 7:5).

10th month – Babylon began the siege of Jerusalem.

The LORD is declaring that these days would become joyful feast days for the people of Judah if they would follow Him in faith and obedience. *Therefore*—let that be a motivation for you to value truth and peace in your relationship with Me and your fellowman.

Zech. 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:

Zech. 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.

Zech. 8:22 Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.

These verses are speaking of a time when the people of many nations will come to seek the LORD in Jerusalem, and to pray before Him. Other prophets also speak of this time, and it is obviously yet future. It is descriptive of the Messiah’s Kingdom.

Is. 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

Is. 2:3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Is. 2:4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Jer. 3:17 At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

Mic. 4:1 But in the last days it shall come to pass, *that* the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

Mic. 4:2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Zech. 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*.

Though despised throughout the last 2000+ years, Israel will one day be blessed and valued among the nations. During Messiah's Kingdom the people of other nations will seek friends among the Jews. God's blessing upon the Jews will be so obvious, that other peoples will conclude that there is blessing in just being near them.

"even shall take the skirt..." – I couldn't help but think of the scripture regarding the woman with an issue of blood that knew that if she could but touch the hem of Jesus' garment, she would be healed.

Matt. 9:19-21 And Jesus arose, and followed him, and *so did* his disciples.

And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind *him*, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

This pictures how the peoples of the nations will feel about their association with the Jews—not because of who they are, but because of the fact that "God is with you."