

God Remembered
Zechariah 8:1-17
Chapter 12
“The Plans I Have For You”

Obedience and Feasting

The word of the Lord of Armies came: 2 The Lord of Armies says this: “I am extremely jealous for Zion; I am jealous for her with great wrath.” 3 The Lord says this: “I will return to Zion and live in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City; the mountain of the Lord of Armies will be called the Holy Mountain.” 4 The Lord of Armies says this: “Old men and women will again sit along the streets of Jerusalem, each with a staff in hand because of advanced age. 5 The streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in them.” 6 The Lord of Armies says this: “Though it may seem impossible to the remnant of this people in those days, should it also seem impossible to me?”—this is the declaration of the Lord of Armies. 7 The Lord of Armies says this: “I will save my people from the land of the east and the land of the west.[a] 8 I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem. They will be my people, and I will be their faithful and righteous God.”

9 The Lord of Armies says this: “Let your hands be strong, you who now hear these words that the prophets spoke when the foundations were laid for the rebuilding of the temple, the house of the Lord of Armies. 10 For prior to those days neither people nor animals had wages. There was no safety from the enemy for anyone who came or went, for I turned everyone against his neighbor. 11 But now, I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days”—this is the declaration of the Lord of Armies. 12 “For they will sow in peace: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce, and the skies will yield their dew. I will give the remnant of this people all these things as an inheritance. 13 As you have been a curse among the nations, house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you, and you will be a blessing. Don’t be afraid; let your hands be strong.” 14 For the Lord of Armies says this: “As I resolved to treat you badly when your ancestors provoked me to anger, and I did not relent,” says the Lord of Armies, 15 “so I have resolved again in these days to do what is good to Jerusalem and the house of Judah. Don’t be afraid. 16 These are the things you must do: Speak truth to one another; make true and sound decisions within your city gates. 17 Do not plot evil in your hearts against your neighbor, and do not love perjury, for I hate all this”—this is the Lord’s declaration.

The ***Eighth Chapter of Zechariah*** is a continuation of God’s response to the question that was asked of Him in ***Chapter Seven***. The question being, do we still have to observe the annual fast days that we held while we were in Babylon? The LORD’S initial response (***7:4-14***) was in the negative, pointing out that the people were never truly fasting because they were repentant and wished to draw near to God once more, but rather, they fasted simply because they felt sorry for themselves. The LORD admonished them to be genuine in their repentance and faith, to love Him with all their heart, and to love their neighbors as themselves.

The ***Eighth Chapter***, however, begins with the promise of great blessings if the children of Israel will simply honor God and obey His commandments. The words must have brought a refreshing sense of encouragement to the people, for to hear that God truly desired to prosper their comings and goings was such an incredible change in the lives they had lived up to this point. Just to know that God was willing to give them grace must have been overwhelming. The same would be true of any sinner who learns that Christ stands with open arms, willing and waiting to forgive and forget the sin of the weary prodigal who wishes to return home.

It is important for us to understand the character of our God. For He takes no delight in the punishment of the unrighteous. He would much prefer to forgive and restore.

Tell them. "As I live — this is the declaration of The LORD God — I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked person should turn from his way and live. Repent, repent of you evil ways! Why will you die, house of Israel?"

Ezekiel 33:11-12

The LORD declared this to the Israelites even before they were taken into captivity. He gains no pleasure from the punishment of the rebellious. But His holy nature requires Him to judge the unrepentant soul. God simply cannot be righteous and conduct Himself any other way. There must be a penalty for sin. Thankfully, Christ has paid that penalty for us upon Calvary's cross; He being our propitiation, meaning that God's wrath was fully satisfied by the price that Jesus paid. So why would we not run to Him for the forgiveness that we so desperately need?

The LORD begins His discourse in ***Zechariah Chapter 8*** with the declaration of His Covenant Name YHVH. And He would repeat that Name some twenty-two times in this chapter. It would serve the people to understand that God intended to fulfill His covenants that He had made with Abraham. For our God remembers each of His promises. Though Israel had strayed mightily from the course upon which He had established them, He would not turn His back on those He loved.

The LORD reminded His covenant people that He was "*extremely jealous*" for them (***vs. 2***). To some who are misinformed this declaration carries a negative connotation. However, it simply means that God is protective of His chosen people as any good husband would be towards the wife that he loved. God has every right to punish his people for their rebellious ways, but woe to those who would use God's judgment as an opportunity to harm those He has chosen to preserve. Babylon had learned this particular lesson the hard way for they are no more.

God reassured His people through the prophet Zechariah that he had marvelous plans for the tiny nation. Some of these promises had in fact enjoyed a short term fulfillment while many of them looked to a future time when The Messiah would come to sit on David's throne in Jerusalem. Every promise that God makes will be kept in its entirety. Not because His people are good and deserving, but rather, because He is good and merciful. He resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (***James 4:6***).

God promised that in spite of all the strife and violence that had once dominated their beloved city of Jerusalem, a time of peace and prosperity was on the horizon. It would be a time when the aged could sit along the city streets and watch the children at play. Such a peace would ensure that both the very young and the aged, the two most vulnerable age groups would live in security. What a beautiful picture of the peace that God wants His people to enjoy! And though it was hard for the hearers of this message to believe considering all they had endured, God assured them that it would come as no surprise to Him (***vs. 6***). For He has the power to make the bitter, sweet and the desolate wasteland, a place of plenty. Nothing is impossible for God (***Matthew 19:26; Luke 1:3; Philipians 4:13***).

The next portion of The LORD'S declaration most definitely is a reference to the millennial reign of Christ, for God promises to gather His chosen people together in Israel from the east and the west. At the time of this writing, Israel had only been scattered to the east, but never to the west. That actually occurred during the time of the diaspora, when Rome destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD and sent its inhabitants off in every direction. To this day, the Jewish people are scattered throughout the entire world. But a day is coming, when all of the people of the covenant will return to their homeland. This phenomena is already occurring as Israel once again became a nation in 1948. Since that time many Jews throughout the world have slowly begun to migrate homeward.

The trouble that Israel faces in our own time is none other than a satanic attack in an effort to thwart the promises of God. The enemies of God's people recognize that the prophetic word of God is being fulfilled in the Jewish state, and therefore, the unrelenting attacks from the godless such as Hamas and Hezbollah are ever on the increase. We must, as Believers, pray like never before for Israel, for anti-semitism is increasing throughout Europe, and sadly, even in the U.S. We must never forget the warning given in regard to the people of Abraham in ***Genesis Chapter 12***.

I will bless those who bless you. I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt.
Genesis 12:3a

God has promised to bring the Jews back to their homeland from every corner of the world when? When The Messiah comes to reign in Jerusalem. In Christ, all the prophecies of the consolation of Israel will be realized. So a day is coming when God's chosen people will indeed have peace. This will occur after the seven years of horrific tribulation that is coming at the end of the age. Then, The Prince of Peace will come to reign in peace!

After this declaration, The LORD takes Zechariah back to the here and now, as it were. He reminded the people how bad things had been just two years prior, when the work to rebuild The LORD'S temple was at a standstill. People were living for themselves and had forgotten the work of The LORD. Then the prophets spoke (**vs. 9**), and the people listened. The LORD reminded them what life was like before they heeded the prophets Haggai and Zechariah:

The word of The LORD came through the prophet Haggai: "Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now, The LORD of Armies says this: "Think carefully about your ways: You have planted much but harvested little, you eat but never have enough to be satisfied. You drink but never have enough to be happy. You put on clothes but never have enough to get warm. The wage earner puts his wages into a bag with a hole in it."

Haggai 1:3-6

God went on to point out to the people how far they had come after heeding the Word that He had spoken to them through His prophets. In fact, things had gotten much better for them. Times were starting to get good in Israel once more, thus proving that God can be trusted to keep His Word, and that obedience is always rewarded. And God promised that He would keep those blessings coming (**vs. 12-15**). There had been a time when the name of Israel was synonymous with cursing, but a time was coming when, to be an Israelite was to be a people of great blessedness. God's people have nothing to fear when their lives bring Him honor and glory.

We, as they, bring honor and glory to The LORD as we obey Him from the heart and show the same kindness and love to others as He has shown us. To love our neighbor as ourselves means that we treat them in the same manner that we wish to be treated (**Matthew 7:12**). And once more God speaks of the life of those who are following after His own heart:

These are the things you must do: Speak truth to one another; make true and sound decisions within your city gates. Do not plot evil in your hearts against your neighbor, and do not love perjury, for I hate all this...
Zech. 8:16

To be fair and honest in our dealings with those around us is to show that we love God and wish to live a life that is pleasing to Him. We must all stand before Him and give an account for what we have done in this life. Nothing shall go unseen. Evil will be condemned and righteousness will be rewarded.

For our God... remembers.

"...For I know the plans I have for you" — this is the LORD's declaration — "plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

Jeremiah 29:11