

***FPFWC Christian Development***



**Called to God's Work of Justice**  
May 2020

Spring Quarter

*May 9, 2020*

## **Lesson #2 – Promising Peace**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Zechariah 8:1-8; 11-17

### **ICE BREAKERS -**

1. What can we learn about God's promises?
2. How can we find peace?

*Key Verse: Again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not. **Zechariah 8:15***

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

By one count, there are at least 30 men in the Bible by the name of Zechariah. The one who wrote the book of today's study was a prophet from a priestly family; his recorded ministry occurred after the Babylonian exile (Ezra 5:1, 2; 6:14; Nehemiah 12:12, 16). The datings in Zechariah 1:1, 7; 7:1 compute to a time between late 520 BC and late 518 BC.

The setting in post-exilic Jerusalem is essential to understanding the book of Zechariah. Twenty years after the return from exile, signs of God's continued favor seemed to have disappeared (Ezra 4:24; Haggai 1:1-11). Many of those who had returned from exile undoubtedly wondered if God had forgotten them.

### **LESSON COMMENTARY**

#### **Concerning Restoration and Rejection (8:1-17)**

The third message in response to the delegation points to the future fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. The return from captivity was not the fulfillment of the promises. Rather, the restoration of Israel would take place in the distant future when God would restore, rather than reject, them.

**8:1-8**. Reiterating God's words from 1:14, the Lord once again declared His love for Israel and His determination to judge the nations with **wrath** (8:2; cf. comments on 1:14). Although some see God's promise of restoration as having been fulfilled historically at the return from captivity, for several reasons it is better to see these predictions fulfilled in the eschatological messianic kingdom.

First, as in 1:12-17, the depiction of Jerusalem fits more with the depiction of the millennial kingdom in prophetic literature (see comments on 1:12-17). Second, the terminology used in 8:3 (the Lord promised to **return to Zion and to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem**) points to an eschatological fulfillment. The term "Zion" is generally used eschatologically in prophetic literature, and the Hebrew word for "dwell" (*sakan*) connotes permanent residence (Merrill, *An Exegetical Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 221). Obviously the Lord did not take up permanent residence in Jerusalem at

the return from captivity nor has He yet done so. Third, it would require a serious dilution of the promises to consider them fulfilled at the return from captivity. One would be hard pressed to see Jerusalem as having already become a **City of Truth**, a **Holy Mountain** (8:3), or a place of complete security (8:4-5). The regathering described in 8:7-8 is universal and not merely from Babylon. Moreover, although idolatry did cease with the return from Babylon, Israel did not become a complete people of truth and righteousness at that time or ever since.

The depiction of the messianic kingdom is glorious. Then, the Lord will be *present in the midst of Jerusalem* (8:3a), which other biblical passages associate with the Messiah reigning there (Ps 2:6; Isa 9:7; Zch 9:9-10). He will also *purify* Jerusalem, as seen in the new names that the city and temple mount will be given, **the City of Truth** and **the Holy Mountain** (8:3b). **Old men and old women** as well as **boys and girls**, the most defenseless elements of society, will be safe on the streets of Jerusalem, demonstrating God's future *protection* of His people (8:4-5). Finally, God's *people* will be restored. From a human perspective, a future eschatological restoration of the Jewish people from a worldwide dispersion might seem **too difficult** for God to effect (8:6). Nevertheless, God will bring the Jewish people back from the **east** and the **west** (8:7), indicating a worldwide restoration, from far more places than Babylon. In that day, not only will they be physically restored to the land of Israel, but they will also be spiritually transformed. Israel will become God's people in the fullest sense—He **will be their God in truth and righteousness** (8:8).

**8:9-17.** The prophet moved from the vision of the future to an exhortation for his own day. The promise of restoration was to affect the behavior of the returned Jewish people at that time. Described as those who listened **to these words from the mouth of the prophets** Haggai and Zechariah, the people were to be encouraged (lit., **be strong**) in the work of rebuilding the temple (8:9). As a motivation to finish their task, Zechariah reminded them of their previous poverty (**no wage**) and distress (**no peace**) when they had failed to complete the temple prior to 520 BC (8:10; cf. Hg 1:6-11 and comments there). God promised that if they would now be faithful in building in their own day, the land would again be fruitful, there would be adequate rain, and **the remnant would inherit all these blessings** (Zch 8:12). Instead of being an example of God's **curse among the nations**, Israel would become an example of God's  **blessing** (8:13).

Using the exhortation, **do not fear**, two more times (8:13, 15), the prophet exhorts Israel to persist. Not only were they to complete the temple but to practice righteous behavior. Since God had **purposed... to do good to Jerusalem** at that time (8:15), they were to become honest men and women. Since God is truth, He hates all forms of dishonesty (8:17). Therefore, the returned remnant was to **speak the truth** and **judge with truth** (8:16), to forego **evil** plans and reject **perjury** (lit., false oaths).

**LESSON NUGGET** – The Lord loves children. He says, “The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.” To the Lord, one of the major tragedies of our day is how our children have to live because of the sins of adults.

**Sources:** *Moody Bible Commentary; Wiersbe Bible Commentary; The Word For Today Bible; and Standard Sunday School lesson.*