

"God's Purposes"

Zechariah 8

Introduction: Today as we return to our study of Zechariah we are coming to Zechariah 8. Last week we finished chapter 7, and it was in that chapter that we considered the question which the Jews had for God. They wanted to know if they needed to keep the fast which they started to commemorate the fall of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar. As God spoke through Zechariah, He revealed to the Jews that their worship was empty. The fasts were not for Him but for them. God went on to warn them concerning the fact that they were growing spiritually cold. They had returned from the captivity and at this time the temple was about half way completed. The persecution had subsided and now they were beginning to relax. For this reason God reminded them about what had happened leading up to the captivity.

Notice Zechariah 7:9-14

Some would look at the chastening which God brought upon the Jews and see it as being too harsh. That thought then brings us to chapter 8.

I. The Purpose

Notice Zechariah 8:1-2

The reason for the chastening was because God was jealous for Jerusalem and His people. He had great plans for the Jews and He invested far too much in them to let them go down a path of destruction. They were His chosen people, and they were called to be His earthly representatives on the earth to all other nations.

I want to show you some verses from Ezekiel 16 which I would recommend that you read in its entirety. In this chapter of Ezekiel Israel is pictured as an unfaithful wife.

Ezekiel 16:1-11

Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

² *Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,*

³ *And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.*

⁴ *And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all.*

⁵ None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.

⁶ And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.

⁷ I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare.

⁸ Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.

⁹ Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil.

¹⁰ I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.

¹¹ I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck.

This is a picture of what God did for Israel. Then Ezekiel describes what happened.

Ezekiel 16:15-17

¹⁵ But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was.

¹⁶ And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so.

¹⁷ Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them,

This is just a small glimpse of what Israel did but the point is they were unfaithful. God had blessed them and made an everlasting Covenant, and they still turned their backs upon Him and worshipped false gods. This is why the captivity was so severe. You see God had something far better for the nation if they would just walk in obedience to Him.

Jeremiah 29:19-12

¹⁰ For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

¹² Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

This chastening will not stop until Israel turns to God and walks in obedience and accepts Jesus Christ as their King.

Application:

If you are a born again believer God is also jealous for you. He has invested so much so that we could be the bride of His Son Jesus Christ. He died upon the cross so that we could be forgiven.

Isaiah 53:4-7, 10-11

⁴ Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

¹¹ He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

God gave His only begotten Son to die for us so that we could be forgiven and live lives of righteousness to glorify Him. He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings.

Ephesians 1:3

³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*

Just as Isarel was God representative in the Old Testament, the church is His representative today.

2 Corinthians 5:17, 20-21

¹⁷ *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

²⁰ *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

²¹ *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

God has a plan for His church that for all eternity we will be the trophies of His grace.

Ephesians 2:5-7

⁵ *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*

⁶ *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

⁷ *That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

The point we need to understand is that God will not allow us to go off into sin, just as He would not allow the Jews to live in sin.

Matthew 7:13-14

¹³ *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:*

¹⁴ *Because strait is the gate, and **narrow** is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

The word "narrow" means "affliction." This means that after we are saved, we are to walk the narrow path and if we do not we will experience affliction. Not because God likes to see us suffer but because He loves us, and He wants the best for us.

II. The Promise

Notice Zechariah 8:3-5

These verses point toward the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ. In that Kingdom Jerusalem will be the spiritual capital of the world. The Lord will dwell and reign from Jerusalem. Verses 4 and 5 look toward the peace that will exist in the Kingdom. The elderly and the children are the two most vulnerable groups of a nation. The way these two groups are treated tell what the nation is like. When these two groups are oppressed and mistreated it tells you that the nation and its leaders are spiritually corrupt.

Let us notice what happened during the captivity.

Lamentations 2:21-22

²¹ ***The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets**: my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword; thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger; thou hast killed, and not pitied.*

²² *Thou hast called as in a solemn day my terrors round about, so that in the day of the LORD's anger none escaped nor remained: those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed.*

In the Kingdom there will be perfect peace and perfect justice. The old will live the entire 1000 years and there will be millions of children born and all will grow up in peace and safety.

Notice Zechariah 8:6-8

There will be a world wide gathering of the Jews. They were dispersed across the globe in AD 70 when the Romans overthrew Jerusalem. Today they are being gathered back into their homeland. When the Kingdom comes, they will dwell in Jerusalem and the Lord will dwell with them.

III. The Persuasion

Notice Zechariah 8:9

The purpose of God giving this information to the Jews was to motivate them to strengthen their hands and get to work on finishing the temple. The prophets they were to listen to were Haggai and Zechariah. The prophecy which God gave them was to persuade them to get busy.

Application:

Knowing what God says about the future should also cause us to be motivated and strengthen our hands in His work.

2 Peter 3:10-14

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

¹¹ Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

¹² Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

¹³ Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

¹⁴ Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Because everything here is going to burn up we should then live for the things of eternity and not the things of this world.

Ecclesiastes 2:18-19

¹⁸ Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

¹⁹ And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.

1 John 3:1-3

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

² *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

³ *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

Conclusion:

Notice Zechariah 8:10

God had brought about all the previous problems.

Application:

I want to be careful with this application, but it does need to be stated. If things are not going well in your life maybe it is because you are not serving and living for the Lord the way that you need to. Remember the way is NARROW which means it is the "WAY OF AFFLICTION."