

Message #11

Zechariah 8:1-23

This past week, Clare Ansberry wrote an article for the Wall Street Journal that was interesting. The article was called “What is the Perfect Age?” The basic point of the article was to try to discover what the perfect age for a person based on various factors (career, finances, children, etc.). Many people were polled and there were some fascinating conclusions. For example, most women wanted to look like they did at age 36. What they did was ask women to bring in the picture they liked best about themselves and it turned out that age 36 was the picture. But when all the data had been examined, the conclusion was the best age turned out to be about age 50. In fact, one doctor asks patients about 50 years old if they would prefer to be in their 30’s and all but one person said, “No.”

Now I want to develop this to history. If you could pick one age or time frame to live your life, what would it be? Would you want to live in Biblical times? Would you want to live in the Reformation time of the 1500’s? Would you want to live back in the Revival times of the 1700’s? Would you want to live in the 1800’s? Would you want to live in the early 1900’s? What would be your perfect time to live?

Well if you ask that question of Zechariah, he would say the best time to live is in the future. The best days for the nation Israel are ahead. Israel has had a rough history. With the exception of the days of David and Solomon, her history has been a national disaster. There hasn’t been any perfect time for Israel, but one is coming and that is the subject of Zechariah 8.

According to **verse 1**, “the word of the LORD of hosts” came again to Zechariah. This is a good word and a needed word. We may recall that the last time the Word of the Lord came to Zechariah in chapter 7 the message was not real positive. God said your religious fasts and feasts mean nothing to Me. You have all your religious stuff and it is nothing but ritual. You have never dealt with your sin and your sin is the reason for the disasters I have authorized to come against you. You are not serious about Me or My Word, which is why I let your Temple be demolished.

But God’s Word now comes to Israel with a very positive message and that message is your best days are coming. Your best days are still ahead. What God says through Zechariah is this:

GOD HIMSELF IS JEALOUS FOR ISRAEL AND LOVES ISRAEL AND ONE DAY HE WILL RETURN IN PERSON AND RESTORE HER AND BLESS HER, AND ALL THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD WILL SEE IT AND HONOR IT AND IN VIEW OF THAT, GOD’S PEOPLE NEED TO PURSUE THAT WHICH IS GODLY.

In **verse 2** it is stated twice that the “LORD of hosts” is jealous for Israel. The name “LORD of hosts” is used in this one chapter some 13 times. God wants His people to realize that He is sovereign over everything in heaven and on earth. He is in charge of all angelic forces.

Now two times in verse 2, God says I am jealous for Zion. Zion is a term that refers to the nation Israel, it refers to the land of Israel, it refers to the key city of Israel, Jerusalem, and it refers to the specific place where the Temple will sit. All are in view.

The word “jealous” comes from a verb root that means “to burn or to glow.” God has a warm, burning glow in His heart for Israel and it is at an exceeding level. God loves Israel. God says I am exceedingly jealous of His people “with great wrath.”

That prepositional phrase “with great wrath” explains the reason why God allowed bad things to happen to Israel. He is jealous for His nation. He caused their world to fall apart because He was ticked off at them.

However, that phrase means much more than that. The fact that He is exceedingly jealous for Israel is bad news for the nations who have done things against Israel. Because He has a wonderful love for Israel, He will bring about great wrath on those who are her enemies.

David Baron said look around, where are the nations of antiquity who lifted up their hands against the Jewish people? The truth is, they are gone; God has wiped them out (*Zechariah*, p. 231).

Now beginning at **verse 3** says God describes a dream world for Israel. He opens this up by saying, “I will return to Zion.” The implication is He was there once before. When He does return to Zion, there will be at least 13 amazing future realities that will exist:

FUTURE PROMISED REALITY #1 – God Himself will actually dwell in Jerusalem. 8:3a

Now we know that the specific God/Man who will actually live in Jerusalem is Jesus Christ. He said that He would come back to this very city and everyone in the city would cry “blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD” (Matt. 23:37-39). Just think about this—God, Himself, will actually live in Jerusalem.

FUTURE PROMISED REALITY #2 – Jerusalem will be called the city of truth. 8:3b

Jerusalem will become “the city of truth.” This will be a big city and there will be no deception or misuse of justice. Jerusalem will be known as the truth city. There will be no false religions, no false concepts or delusions. The city will be known for truth.

FUTURE PROMISED REALITY #3 – Mount Zion will be called the Holy Mountain. 8:3c

This mountain will be holy because the LORD will actually be there and this is the place where He will be worshipped. This will be designated as the Holy Mountain of the world.

FUTURE PROMISED REALITY #4 – Jewish men and women will live to an old age and sit in a street. **8:4**

Now what is brought out here is wonderful news for elderly Jewish people. They will sit out in the streets and in public city places and be very safe. The adjective “old” does not mean that the person is decrepit or an invalid, but it does refer to a very old age (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 252).

The image here is that older people will be respected and protected and honored. They will sit in the streets and will not be stuck in some nursing home and forgotten. Jewish people have had a tough life. Many older Jewish men and women still work. This is a time when they will be able to sit and relax and they will be honored.

FUTURE PROMISED REALITY #5 – Jewish boys and girls will play safely in the streets. **8:5**

Two extreme age categories are pointed out to show that regardless of what the age, life will be peaceful and good for those in Israel. All ages of people will enjoy life. There will be safety, security, posterity and prosperity.

Just imagine this. You will be able to let your children wander in the city. Today you don't dare let them out of your sight at the mall or in a store.

I love what one commentator said. We tend to measure the success and significance of a city by businesses, buildings, wealth, art and culture. Zechariah says in a really successful city the old people and the young children are safe and honored wherever they are (George Klein, *Zechariah*, p. 236).

Let's face it, we have never seen a city like this and Jerusalem has not ever been a city like this. In fact, if you visit Jerusalem today, you will see armed guards. So these are amazing predictions.

These promises are so remarkable that God reminds the people in **verse 6**, nothing is too difficult for Him to do. He is the LORD of hosts. He has all authority and power and this is what He will do for Israel. God has all power to accomplish what He promises to do. God certainly has all power to fulfill His own Word. What is impossible for men is very possible to God (Luke 18:27).

FUTURE PROMISED REALITY #6 – God will save His people from foreign lands to the east and west. **8:7**

It is significant that God points out the west because many Jewish people live in areas west of Israel. This point on the compass would certainly include the United States. Actually, most Jews today live west of the Promised Land. Jewish people are wonderful people in our country; but while they are in our country, they are not home. Their homeland is Israel and one day God will take them to that land.

FUTURE PROMISED REALITY #7 – God will bring His people back to the land. **8:8**

Israel will be in her land and have the true God as her God and they will live in truth and righteousness. This will not just be a physical restoration, but it will also be a spiritual restoration.

FUTURE PROMISED REALITY #8 – God will bless Israel with great wages. **8:10-11**

When the Jews returned from Babylon, no man was paid any wage and no animal was paid any wage, either. Conditions were tough and the people of God were in survival mode. They were struggling just to survive. Not only was Israel in economic duress, but there was always the threat of enemies (**v. 10**). God says from now on I will not treat Israel like that. See, **God is sovereign over economic prosperity and poverty**. God will turn this all around for Israel.

FUTURE PROMISED REALITY #9 – God will physically bless Israel in her inherited land. **8:12**

God says I will make the land of Israel the most fertile place in the world. Any seed will grow. The vine will produce.

I read of a time when people were moving west to states like Wyoming thinking they could get great acreage and produce farm crops. Some people actually sold everything they could to purchase land. What they discovered was the land was great for cattle, but not farming. Well Israel's land is not known to be the greatest land for producing crops, but one day it will be.

FUTURE PROMISED REALITY #10 – God will bless Israel and Israel will be a blessing to all nations. **8:13**

Just think about what is predicted here. Nations of the world, who used to think of Israel as a curse, now realize she is the most blessed nation on earth. There will come a day when the nations of the world will honor and esteem and love the Jews.

FUTURE PROMISED REALITY #11 – God will purpose to do nothing but good for Israel just as He purposed to do bad to Israel. **8:14-15**

God reminds Israel that He is the One who sovereignly did cause negative things to happen to Israel because Israel's fathers provoked God to anger and to wrath. He is also the One who will sovereignly cause all good things to happen for Israel in the future

FUTURE PROMISED REALITY #12 – God will turn mourning fasts into joyous feasts for Israel. **8:19**

God will put an end to the religious fasts and turn them into feasts. All sorrow will be turned to joy.

FUTURE PROMISED REALITY #13 – God will cause all nations of the world to seek the favor of a Jew because Jews will be blessed by God. **8:20-23**

These verses are absolutely amazing. There will come a day when the most powerful nations on earth and many cities of the world will travel to Jerusalem to seek truth and to seek God and to ask for His blessings. Israel will be the leader of all nations of the world.

When this happens, ten men from other nations will so realize God is with Israel that they will want to touch the garment of a Jew (**v. 23**). They will realize God is for National Israel and if they are going to be right with God, they need to be right with national Israel.

This will be a time when the Jews will be recognized as the most privileged, prominent and prestigious people on the face of the earth. Days of demeaning the Jews will be over. All nations of the world will honor the Jew. This is what God says He will do for Israel in the future. Now as God's people wait for this, what should they do in the present time?

Response #1 - Listen to the Word of God. **8:9a**

Response #2 - Use your hands to do the work of God. **8:9b**

Response #3 - Speak the truth to one another. **8:16a**

No one is right with God or with others until they speak truth.

Response #4 - Judge in truth. **8:16b**

God demands that just, honest decisions be made.

Response #5 - Judge with the view of having peace. **8:16c**

Response #6 - Do not devise evil in your heart against another. **8:17a**

The Septuagint refers to devising evil against a neighbor.

Response #7 - Do not love perjury. **8:17b**

One of the big sins people had was swearing falsely in a court of law. All of these things God hates.

Response #8 - Love truth. **8:19b**

Response #9 - Love peace. **8:19c**

Notice how the chapter ends—"God is with you."

Is God with you or more precise, is God in you?