

Introduction

The sombre word of judgment in Zechariah chapter 7, is thankfully not the end of the story. God's commitment to His chosen city is decisive. The seventy years of her judgment are reaching an end and now there is to be a new beginning as promised. Jerusalem would be the 'faithful city' and the 'holy mountain' (**Zech 8:3**).

The dwelling place of the true and holy God would also be populated a holy people. It is not enough for God to return to the land; for His return to be a blessing, the community of the people of God must also be transformed.

Zechariah 7 confronted the Jews with their duty to think first about God and then the well-being of others, which together are essential to true godliness.

It contained God's reproof against Israel's false religion, whilst chapter 8 brings his positive incentive in terms of the blessings of true faith.

Summary

Having reproved Israel's false religion in Chapter 7, the Lord completes the picture in Zechariah 8:1-17, with His positive incentive to true religion in terms of the blessings of true faith.

1. Promised Blessing vv. 1-5; 7-8

It is because of God's jealous, fervent love that He returns with the promises that follow (**Zech. 8:2**).

First, comes a promise of God's return to the city (Zech. 8:3).

The point of this promise is that the restoration of Jerusalem will be a success.

God promises that He will return. Jerusalem will be called the faithful city and Temple Mount will again be called the holy mountain because the Lord will be there.

God's presence always means moral and spiritual renewal.

How does God works renewal today? It is in the preaching and believing of his Word that God is present and by which he works renewal in His people (**John 17:17**).

Secondly, there is a promise of future prosperity and peace (Zech. 8:4-5).

Thirdly, the Lord foretells the city's repopulation with people from the east and west (Zech. 8:7-8). The city had been depopulated after the Lord abandoned it.

With His return, people come to serve Him there again.

This pattern of blessing describes how the church is built up today.

Many Christians measure success merely in terms of the final blessing-the ingathering of many people but true and lasting blessing starts with God's presence in the church.

In the centuries leading to the birth of Christ, Jewish society would be revived in Jerusalem, nevertheless nothing quite like the picture of these verses was ever fully realized.

How and when, therefore, are we to see these promises fulfilled?

Contrary to the view of Dispensationalism, Old Testament Israel finds its fulfillment in the True Israelite, Jesus Christ, and consequently in the New Testament church. Zechariah's promises have reference to Christ's church. They are being fulfilled spiritually in the age of grace through those who have entered the church by faith in Jesus Christ. The church is the true temple in which God keeps his promise to come and dwell by his Spirit; it is in the church that God brings spiritual prosperity and to the church that even now, He is bringing the nations.

The ultimate fulfillment of God's promises will take place in the return of Christ to gather all his people into God's eternal house.

2. Required Response vv. 6-17

God's promises always call for faith in response. In the midst of these promises to bless, comes a challenge to trust in God by believing his Word (**Zech 8:6**).

Zech 7 defined true religion as justice, mercy, and compassion, and in **Zech 8:16-17** there is the same emphasis. True religion is found in godliness, with truth and love as the pattern for our lives.

In addition, the Lord calls for another aspect of true spirituality: service for the advancement of His kingdom. In our day this means helping to build the church, and especially to support its evangelistic witness to the world.

What is true religion?

“It is a desire to serve God out of confidence in his promise to bless. True religion is motivated by devotion to God, yes, but also out of a desire to realize his salvation.”

The Bible never condemns a desire for spiritual blessing. Turning to God for blessing simply takes Him at his Word, acknowledging that He is the Lord Almighty, and that He and not the idols of the world is the source of salvation.

Zechariah reminded the people of God's intended blessings, together with the call to faithful and bold service to the Lord, always based on the promises of God (**8:12-15**). Echoing the exhortation of Zechariah 7, the Lord then says: "Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the LORD" (**Zech. 8:6-17**).

“In this God calls sweetly, with the knowledge of his blessings, in prosperity and in want, to all who seek him and long to do his will.”

True religion involves a genuine relationship that both gives and receives.

God gives himself to his people and receives our love in return; we give our hearts to God and receive from him eternal life (**Zech 8:8**).