

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION TO ZECHARIAH 8

This chapter contains promises of various blessings to the people of the Jews; and exhortations to each of the duties incumbent on them; and is concluded with a prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles. The cause of all the blessings promised is the love of God to them, signified by zeal, or jealousy for them, (^{<388B>}Zechariah 8:1,2). The blessings promised are the Lord's return to dwell in Jerusalem, and the integrity and holiness of that city, (^{<388B>}Zechariah 8:3). The long life of the inhabitants of it, and the plenty of children that should be born in it, (^{<388B>}Zechariah 8:4,5) and, however wonderful and incredible this might seem to some, it was not to the Lord, who was determined to bring his people that were in various distant countries to Jerusalem, and settle them there; and renew and reestablish his covenant with them, (^{<388B>}Zechariah 8:6-8) wherefore the Lord encourages them to go on in rebuilding the temple, (^{<388B>}Zechariah 8:9) and promises them that things would be better with them than in times past; that whereas there had been nothing but penury, affliction, and distress, now there should be great affluence and prosperity, (^{<388B>}Zechariah 8:10-12) and though before they were a curse among the nations, now they should be a blessing; and though their fathers were punished, they should be dealt well with, (^{<388B>}Zechariah 8:13-15) and then they are exhorted to the discharge of several duties mentioned, to which they are induced by the Lord's hatred of that which is evil, and by his turning their fasts into cheerful feasts. (^{<388B>}Zechariah 8:16-19) to which is added a prophecy of the calling and conversion of the Gentiles, which would make for the glory of the Jewish church; who are described by their numbers, being many people, and the inhabitants of many cities; by their association together, to pray to the Lord, and worship him; by their coming up to Jerusalem for that purpose; and by their junction with the Jews, to which they will be encouraged by having heard that God is with them, (^{<388B>}Zechariah 8:20-23).

Ver. 1. *Again the word of the Lord of hosts came [to me] saying.*] The phrase, "to me", is wanting in the Hebrew text; and is the only place it is

wanting in, as the Masora observes; though undoubtedly it is to be understood; and therefore is rightly supplied, as it is by the Targum, “with me”. Mention being made in the latter part of the preceding chapter (^{<3018>}Zechariah 7:8-14) of the desolations of the earth, comfort is here administered, as Aben Ezra notes.

Ver. 2. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts*, etc.] This prophecy, according to Kimchi and Ben Melech, respects time to come; the days of the Messiah, in the war of Gog and Magog, when they shall come up against Jerusalem, and the Lord shall pour out his great wrath upon them; and it seems right to interpret it, not only literally of Jerusalem, but spiritually of the church in Gospel times:

I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy; the Arabic version reads, “for Jerusalem, and for Zion”; as in (^{<3014>}Zechariah 1:14), (see Gill on “^{<3014>}Zechariah 1:14”):

and I was jealous for her with great fury: that is, against her enemies; the Babylonians and Chaldeans now, and the antichristian powers in Gospel times. The Targum paraphrases it, “against the people that provoked her to jealousy”; the past tense is put for the future, as Kimchi and Ben Melech observe.

Ver. 3. *Thus saith the Lord, I am returned to Zion*, etc.] The temple being now building, and almost finished, and the worship of God restored in it. The Targum renders it, “I will return to Zion”; and it may refer to the time of Christ’s incarnation, when the Redeemer came to Zion, (^{<280>}Isaiah 59:20) or to the time of the conversion of the Jews in the latter day, of both which it is true; (see ^{<6126>}Romans 11:26):

and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: or “cause my Shechinah to dwell there”, as the Targum paraphrases it; which was fulfilled when the Word was made flesh, **καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν**, “and dwelt” or “tabernacled” among the inhabitants of Judea and of Jerusalem, and taught his doctrines, and wrought his miracles, in the midst of them; and will be also when he shall dwell among them by his Spirit and grace in the latter day:

and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; when Christ, who is “truth” itself, was in it, and the truths of the Gospel were preached there by him and his apostles, and they were received and professed by many, though despised by others; and especially in the latter day, when the Jews shall generally and cordially embrace Christ and his Gospel, and shall worship

God in spirit and in truth, and not in that shadowy, formal, and hypocritical way they do now; (see ^{<212>}Isaiah 1:26,27) and especially this will be true of the New Jerusalem, into which nothing shall enter that makes a lie, (^{<617>}Revelation 21:27):

the mountain of the Lord of hosts; which will be established upon the top of the mountains, and where the Lord will be seen and exalted in his glory, even the Lamb, with the hundred and forty four thousand with him, (^{<211>}Isaiah 2:2 ^{<640>}Revelation 14:1):

the holy mountain; where the holy word of God will be preached, the holy ordinances administered, and holiness of life and conversation will be strictly attended to; yea, Holiness will be upon the bells of the horses, (^{<340>}Zechariah 14:20).

Ver. 4. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts*, etc.] These words are used at every consolatory promise given, as Kimchi observes, for the confirmation of it:

there shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem; signifying that the inhabitants should be very healthful; no sweeping disease or calamity should be among them, but they should live to a good old age, as follows:

and every man with his staff in his hand for very age; or “because of multitude of days”^{f154}; the length of time they should have lived in the world, being worn out, not with diseases, but with old age, and therefore obliged to use a staff when they walk the streets for their support; all which is an emblem of the healthfulness of the inhabitants of Zion, who have no reason to complain of sickness, because their sins are forgiven them; and of that spiritual and eternal life, which they that are written among the living in Jerusalem do enjoy; who are in understanding men, fathers in Christ, and are growing up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; (see ^{<250>}Isaiah 65:20).

Ver. 5. *And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls*, etc.] Denoting a large increase of inhabitants, in a literal sense; and may spiritually signify the large numbers of converts, of new born babes, who are regenerated by the grace and Spirit of God, and are accounted of by the Lord for a generation:

playing the streets thereof; being in health and rigour, and in great security. The Targum renders it, “singing” or “praising in the spacious places

thereof"; singing the praises of God in Gospel strains; saying their Hosannas to the Son of David; rejoicing in the great salvation by Christ, and magnifying the grace of God, and setting forth the glories of it in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; (see ^{<4116>}Matthew 11:16,17 21:15,16). In Jerusalem, literally taken, there were various streets, besides the street of the temple, which led to it, (^{<4509>}Ezra 10:9) mention is made of others in Jewish writings, as of the upper street^{f155}, and of the street of the butchers, and of the street of those that dealt in wool^{f156}.

Ver. 6. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts*, etc.] This is repeated for the same end as before; (see Gill on "^{<3804>}Zechariah 8:4"):)

If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days; either in the then present days and time; and the sense is, if it should seem wonderful, incredible, and scarcely possible to the small number of the Jews in Judea, that all the great and good things before promised should be fulfilled; or in the times of the Gospel, when the remnant, according to the election of grace, would wonder at the marvellous loving kindness of the Lord, in doing each great things for his church and people:

should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts; no, not as if it was impossible to be done; it shall be done, as marvellous as it may seem to be. Aben Ezra understands these words, not as spoken by way of interrogation and admiration, but as an affirmation; that God would do that which was marvellous, and such as he had never done the like, even as follows:

Ver. 7. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold*, etc.] As being something wonderful, of great importance, and deserving attention:

I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; this can not be understood of bringing those Jews that remained in Babylon, and other places, to their own land, for Babylon lay north of Judea; (see ^{<3806>}Zechariah 6:6,8), and as yet there were no Jews in the western part of the world; but now they are chiefly in the east and west, from whence they will be gathered at the time of their general conversion; though this may refer to the times of the apostles of Christ, and to their ministry in the several parts of the world, who went forth, east, west, north, and south, and were the means and instruments of saving the Lord's people, both Jews and Gentiles, wherever they came, from the rising of the sun, to the setting of the same; (see ^{<3011>}Malachi 1:11 ^{<4081>}Matthew 8:11).

Ver. 8. *And I will bring them,* etc.] To Zion, into the church of God, the Gospel fold, where Christ has engaged to bring his other sheep, that there may be one fold for Jew and Gentile, (^{<3134>}Jeremiah 3:14) (^{<3106>}John 10:16):

and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: the Gospel church; and be no more foreigners and strangers, but of the household of God, enjoying all the immunities and privileges of the Jerusalem that is above, the mother of us all:

and they shall be my people; appear to be so by effectual calling; which makes those manifest to be the people of God, to be in the covenant of his grace, who before were not known to be so, either by themselves or others, (^{<3120>}1 Peter 2:10):

and I will be their God, in truth, and in righteousness; according to the covenant of his grace, which will now in a very open manner be truly and faithfully fulfilled; and they, in consequence of the grace bestowed on them, will worship God in sincerity and truth, being justified by the righteousness of Christ, and so will have no dependence on their own for their acceptance with God; (see ^{<3129>}Hosea 2:19,20).

Ver. 9. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Let your hands be strong,* etc.] In going on with the building of the temple, which was typical of the church of God, since so many great and good things were promised by the Lord, (^{<3104>}Haggai 2:4):

ye that hear in these days; such as Zerubbabel the ruler, Joshua the high priest, and the rest of the people of the land:

these words by the mouth of the prophets; that is, these prophecies of future good things, which were delivered by Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; who were the prophets,

which [were] in the day [that] the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid; which was in the second year of Darius, on the twenty fourth day of the ninth month, (^{<3120>}Haggai 2:10,18):

that the temple might be built; in order to the rebuilding of it, the foundation was laid; and from that time it was to continue building, till it was finished^{f157}.

Ver. 10. *For before these days,* etc.] That the temple began to be built:

there was no hire for men, nor any hire for beasts; that turned to any account; the wages earned by the one, and with the other, were as if they were put into a bag with holes, did not prosper with them, or do them any service, (^{<3006>}Haggai 1:6 2:16):

neither [was there any] peace to him that went out or came in, because of the affliction; there was no safety in passing to and fro, nor any peaceable enjoyment of what a man had, because of affliction and oppression by the enemy on every side, and from every quarter:

for I set all men everyone against his neighbour; expressive of the internal divisions and contentions among themselves, which are said to be of the Lord, because he permitted them as a chastisement upon them for their sins.

Ver. 11. *But now I [will] not [be] unto the residue of this people*, etc.] The remnant brought out of captivity, settled in the land, and now rebuilding the temple:

as in the former days, saith the Lord of hosts; when they neglected the house of the Lord, caring only for their own cieled houses, (^{<3002>}Haggai 1:2-11).

Ver. 12. *For the seed [shall be] prosperous*, etc.] Being cast into the earth, it shall spring up again, and produce a large increase; whereas before, though they sowed much, it came to little, (^{<3006>}Haggai 1:6):

the vine shall give her fruit; be loaded with clusters, and produce large quantities of wine; whereas before there was a drought upon the new wine; and where there were wont to be had fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty, (^{<3011>}Haggai 1:11 2:16):

and the ground shall give her increase; as usual, meaning of wheat and barley; whereas before there was a drought upon the corn, and where there used to be a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten, (^{<3011>}Haggai 1:11 2:16):

and the heavens shall give their dew; which makes the earth fruitful; whereas before the heaven over them was stayed from dew, and instead of it were blasting, mildew, and hail, (^{<3010>}Haggai 1:10 2:17):

and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these [things]; as a symbol of better things inherited by the remnant according to the election

of grace; and who have the promise both of this life and that to come; and who, seeking in the first place spiritual things, have all others added to them, convenient for them.

Ver. 13. *And it shall come to pass, [that] as ye were a curse among the heathen,* etc.] Reproached, vilified, and called accursed by them; (see ^{<3249>}Jeremiah 24:9) as true Christians, and real believers in Christ, are by the men of this world, (^{<4042>}1 Corinthians 4:12,13):

O house of Judah, and house of Israel; both being carried captive at different times, and were typical of the true and Spiritual Israel of God:

so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing; be blessed in themselves with the above blessings of plenty and prosperity in outward things; (see ^{<3729>}Haggai 2:19) and a blessing to others, and blessed by them; and all those who are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation are blessed with all spiritual blessings in him:

fear not; neither their enemies, nor the accomplishment of these promises:

[but] let your hands be strong; as in (^{<3889>}Zechariah 8:9).

Ver. 14. *For thus saith the Lord of hosts,* etc.] In order to assure them of the truth of what he promised, he observes the fulfilment of what he had threatened, he being as true and faithful in the one as in the other:

As I thought to punish you: determined to do it, by suffering them to be carried captive:

when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the Lord of hosts; by their immorality, idolatry, and contempt of his prophets:

and I repented not; the Targum adds, “of my word”; of the resolution he had taken up in his heart, and of the declaration of it by his prophets, that he would punish them; this he did not repent of, revoke, change, and alter, but steadily abode by it, and executed it.

Ver. 15. *So again,* etc.] Or “so I am returned”^{f158}, as in (^{<3889>}Zechariah 8:3):

have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah; by bestowing the above mentioned blessings on them; and as Jehovah has thought, so it comes to pass, and as he has purposed, so it stands; whatever he determines shall be, as for evil, so for good, (^{<2344>}Isaiah 14:24):

fear ye not; as in (³⁸¹³Zechariah 8:13).

Ver. 16. *These [are] the things that ye shall do*, etc.] Which were duties incumbent on them, and which it became them to perform, under a sense of the favours bestowed on them, to show their gratitude to God, and that they might glorify him:

Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; not using deceit, prevarication, and lying, (⁴⁰²⁵Ephesians 4:25) and it becomes every man under the Gospel dispensation, according to the gift he has received, to speak, publish, and declare the truth of the Gospel, to the edification of others:

execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates; that is, execute true judgment, as in (³⁰⁷⁰Zechariah 7:9) do justice between man and man, without respect of persons; the issue of which will be peace between the contending parties: and this was to be done in their “gates”, because there their courts of judicature were kept.

Ver. 17. *And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour*, etc.] (See Gill on “³⁷¹⁰Zechariah 7:10”) hatred without a cause was a governing vice under the second temple, and Jarchi says was the cause of the destruction of it; (see ⁴⁶⁵⁵John 15:25):

and love no false oath; whereby the character and property of a fellow creature are hurt; nor any vain one, which the Jews were addicted to, (⁴⁰⁵⁴Matthew 5:34,35):

for all these [are things] that I hate, saith the Lord; as being contrary to his nature, and to his law; and is a reason why they should be hated and avoided by men.

Ver. 18. *And the word of the Lord of hosts came unto me, saying.*] The word of prophecy, as the Targum paraphrases it: here begins a new prophecy, respecting the abrogation of Jewish fasts, and the calling of the Gentiles.

Ver. 19. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts*, etc.] What follows is a full answer to the question in (³⁰⁷³Zechariah 7:3):

The fast of the fourth [month]; the month Tammuz, which answers to June: this fast was kept on the ninth day of the month, on account of the city of Jerusalem being broken up on that day^{f159}, as it is said, (^{<128B>}2 Kings 25:3,4 ^{<240D>}Jeremiah 39:2 52:6,7) though Kimchi says this was on the seventeenth day of that month, as also says the Misna^{f160}; on which day a fast was kept likewise, for the breaking of the two tables of the law on that day: the reconciliation of this with the above Scriptures is attempted in the Talmud^{f161} by observing, that the Scripture speaks of the first temple, the Misna of the second temple:

and the fast of the fifth; the month Ab, which answers to July, on the tenth of which the city was burnt, (^{<262D>}Jeremiah 52:12,13) but the fast on account of it was kept on the ninth day; (see Gill on “^{<300B>}Zechariah 7:3”) on which day the Jews say that both the first and second temple were destroyed, Bithur was taken, and the city ploughed^{f162}:

and the fast of the seventh; the month Tisri, which answers to September; on the third of this month a fast was kept on account of the murder of Gedaliah; (see ^{<300B>}Zechariah 7:5) and on the tenth day of the same was the day of atonement, which was the grand fast; (see ^{<427D>}Acts 27:9):

and the fast of the tenth; the month Tebet; which answers to December, on the tenth day of which the city of Jerusalem was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar; and this fast was kept on that account, (^{<262D>}Jeremiah 52:4) now of all these fasts the Lord by the prophet says, they

shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; that is, there shall be no occasion for them; but, on the contrary, such plenty of good things, both temporal and spiritual, shall be had, that, instead of them, rather festivals should be kept with the greatest cheerfulness, joy, and gladness. So Maimonides^{f163} says, that all these fasts shall cease in the times of the Messiah, with all others, which will be times of joy and gladness.

Therefore love the truth and peace; love to speak truth, and execute the judgment of peace, (^{<300B>}Zechariah 8:16) or express by words and deeds love to Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life; and also is our Peace, the Peacemaker, and Peace giver; and on these accounts, as well as on others, is greatly to be loved: likewise the Gospel, which is the word of truth, and the Gospel of peace; which contains nothing but truth, and is the ministry of reconciliation, and is to be loved on that account; and even

peace with men is no further to be loved and sought after than as it is consistent with truth; and these being the principal things under the Gospel dispensation, these, and not fasts, or any other ceremonial observances, are to be attended to.

Ver. 20. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, [It shall] yet [come to pass],* etc.] This is another thing that shall certainly be accomplished:

that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities; in the Gentile world; they shall come and hear the word, believe in Christ, and join together in a Gospel church state; as they did at Antioch, Thessalonica, Corinth, and many other places: Ben Melech says this shall be in the days of the Messiah; and so it has been in the days of the true Messiah Jesus, and will be again in the latter day.

Ver. 21. *And the inhabitants of one [city] shall go to another,* etc.] Which shows their concern for the spiritual welfare of each other, their zeal for the honour and glory of God, and their readiness to attend divine worship:

saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord; for pardoning, justifying, and sanctifying grace which shows their sense of need of these things, and that they are only to be had of the Lord; and that their case required haste, and would admit of no delay:

and to seek the Lord of hosts: by prayer and supplication, as before: the Chaldee paraphrase is, “to seek doctrine from the Lord of hosts”; to learn the truths of his Gospel; to know his will, and be informed of the right way of worshipping him, as well as to seek to Christ for life and salvation:

I will go also; that is, “this shall say to that”, as the Targum supplies it; one shall say to another, and express himself in such language, by way of example and encouragement.

Ver. 22. *Yea, many people, and strong nations,* etc.] Or, “mighty kingdoms”, as the Targum renders it; even such have embraced the Gospel, and professed the Christian religion; of which there has been abundant proof since the downfall of Paganism under Constantine:

shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem; that is, shall attend the public worship of God in the church:

and to pray before the Lord; join in public prayer, and other ordinances of the Gospel. This phrase, which is used also in the preceding verse

(~~302~~Zechariah 8:21), signifies that the Lord, and he only, is the object of prayer: it is not to be made to a creature, or to an idol made with hands, they had been used to pray to before, but to the one only living and true God, Father, Son, and Spirit; and that this is to be done as in the presence of God, who is omniscient, who knows all persons and their cases, and what are their ends and views in their petitions to him, and whether these come from a true heart and unfeigned lips; for all things are naked and open unto him, with whom we have to do; that, under the Gospel dispensation especially, men may come into the presence of God with great freedom and liberty, and pour out their souls before him, and with great boldness and confidence, through the blood of Christ being shed, and a new and living way opened by it, in which they may come and ask in faith whatever they want; though this should always be performed with reverence and godly fear, and with all humility and submission to the will of God: and though it may take in all sorts of prayer, and wherever and by whomsoever performed, either mental or vocal, in the closet or in the family, which is always to be done in like manner before God; yet it seems chiefly to design social and public prayer: which being put up to God in the church, may be said to be before the Lord, it being in the assembly of his saints, where he more especially grants his presence, and shows himself to be a God hearing and answering prayer; (see ~~303~~Psalm 65:1,2).

Ver. 23. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts,* etc.] For the further confirmation and illustration of this prophecy:

in those days [it shall come to pass]; this shall be done in the times of the preaching of the Gospel by Christ and his apostles:

that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew: which may be understood either of our Lord Jesus Christ; who was a Jew by nation, the Jews were his own people, and Judea his nation; by descent, he springing from the tribe of Judah, and the family of David; by religion, being made under the Jewish law; by his habit and dress, by which, as well as by his language, the woman of Samaria knew he was a Jew, (~~304~~John 4:9) and very probably he wore the fringe the Jews did on the border of his garment, (~~305~~Matthew 9:20 ~~306~~Mark 6:56) and which the Jewish doctors think is here meant ^{f164} by the skirt; but this may intend, in a spiritual sense, the skirt being put for the whole garment, (~~307~~Ezekiel 16:8), the robe of Christ's righteousness, which sensible sinners take hold of by faith, and put it on as their justifying

righteousness: and “ten men” out of “all nations” being said to do it, and this number signifying many, (^{<R15>}Leviticus 26:26 ^{<B008>}1 Samuel 1:8) may denote that the number of them that believe in Christ for righteousness, and are justified by it, are many, (^{<R511>}Isaiah 53:11) though they are but few when compared with others; and that as God has chosen, Christ has redeemed, so the Spirit calls some out of all nations; and God is the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, since the one are justified by him as well as the other, (^{<R19>}Romans 3:29,30) or this may be understood of any of the apostles of Christ, who were all Jews; and especially the Apostle Paul, who was the apostle of the Gentiles; who were sent into all the world to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, by which means they came to hear it; and many of them out of every nation laid hold on the skirts of these men; believed and embraced the doctrines they preached; were greatly affected towards them; gave up themselves to them; consorted with them; accompanied them, and cleaved unto them; did not care to part with them, as children, that lay hold on their parents’ skirts, will not leave them, but go with them where they go, as follows:

saying, We will go with you; either with Christ, resolving to follow him whithersoever he goes; to hold to him the Head; to abide by his truths and ordinances; to walk on in his ways, whatever they suffer for his name’s sake: or with his ministers and people, determining to go along and join with them in all religious exercises; (see ^{<B0116>}Ruth 1:16):

for we have heard [that] God is with you: with Christ, as he always was; in the council and covenant of grace before time, and at the beginning of time to his incarnation; and during his state of humiliation, and in his sufferings and death; and now in his state of exaltation; hence his name “Ithiel”, God with me, (Proverbs 30: ^{<B001>}1 John 1:1 8:29 16:32) or with his ministers and people, which he has promised to be unto the end of the world; and this the Gentiles heard and understood, by the power that went along with their ministry, to the conversion of multitudes of sinners; and by the miracles which they wrought, for the confirmation of the doctrines they delivered.