

Midweek | Minor Prophets

Session 15: Zechariah

THE CALL-TURN BACK

The consistent call throughout scripture is to “turn back” or repent. It is a call for exclusive worship of God. In some contexts the word means to change directions, reverse. God’s call in Zechariah (1) is turn back to HIM. “This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Return to me,’ declares the Lord Almighty, ‘and I will return to you,’ says the Lord Almighty. **4** Do not be like your ancestors, to whom the earlier prophets proclaimed: This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Turn from your evil ways and your evil practices.’ (**Zech. 1:3 & 4 NIV**)

He warns, “Don’t be like your ancestors.” Israel was prompted to look into the past of its ancestry for examples of obedience and disobedience. Since we share the same ancestry, we too should look with them into the past.

For disciples of Jesus, the scriptures are the family of God photo album tracing our faith ancestry as **1 Corinthians 10:1-13** tells us: “For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that *our ancestors* were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. **2** They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. **3** They all ate the same spiritual food **4** and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. **5** Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. **6** Now *these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.* **7** Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.” **8** We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. **9** We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. **10** And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. **11** These things *happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us*, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. **12** So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! **13** No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” EMPHASIZE the italics.

By extension, we are a continuation of Israel, the people God *set apart* for himself. To illustrate: From time to time my wife will bring home desserts from random places. Our freezer is filled with frozen desserts, which we'll thaw out on occasion. If the dessert is left in the fridge it'll probably be eaten soon. In order to secure the dessert intended for me, when times are desperate, I will write my name on the ziplock bag housing the dessert. Thereby setting it apart for myself. It is called by my name. We are the people called by his name, set apart exclusively for him. Therefore, Zechariah's message to Israel of turning back to Yahweh and looking at their ancestor's example is a call for us to do likewise. Jesus' call to us is the same as it was for them, "turn from evil and follow me" (Mark 6:12; Acts 17:30).

THE PROMISE AND FAITHFULNESS

We have the promise of Israel's restoration and take note of God's seeming delay (which indicates Zechariah's call to turn back, be faithful, and don't be like the ancestors). God promises that the temple will be rebuilt, he will return to Jerusalem bringing comfort, prosperity, protection, cleansing of sin, judgment for their enemies, and renewal for them (Zech. 1:14-16, 8, 12,13,14). The beloved temple will be rebuilt. The project was started but no where near completion. When it seemed as though nothing was happening with passion he declared, "Do not despise the day of small beginnings" (Zechariah 4:10). The hope of the temple's reconstruction points to the renewal of all things. It anticipates the day when God's dimension and ours will become visible to one another and merge. The home of God will be with people. Heaven and earth united.

However, in the meantime, what encourages sustainable perseverance for hoping in the promises of God? Hope in the character of God. God sees *where* the story is heading and he plans accordingly although he may not fully reveal the details of his intentions. Life with God is like standing dead center of a parade. Lots of activity is happening beside us, in front of us, and behind us. From our vantage point, in the parade, it is hard to see where the parade ends or where it started, but God is like the blimp that flies above seeing the beginning and the end. Our Father is wise, which means he chooses the best goals and plots the best course of action to accomplish them. The primary promise of the text is the presence of God with his people furnishing them with gladness: "Shout and be glad, Daughter Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you" (Zechariah 2:10). He is on an expedition to restore their dignity assuring them

of his protection and presence. Yahweh affirms them with a cherishing title, “apple of my eye.” He will forgive their sin and they will initiate peace with their neighbors.

Yahweh will grant them eternal freedom from oppression...they will be the Lord’s inheritance. In the mean time, between time, he expects faithful-obedience to him and the task (Zech. 8:9, 16). Their faithfulness and righteous acts, reflecting the faithfulness of their Messiah, will be a means by which the nations come under the care of God’s kingdom (Zechariah 8:14-23).

In summary of this point, the greatness of God’s promises is summed in the promise of his future presence with them. Paul alludes to this in 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1. God is still calling his people to faithful-obedience and the task of building the temple, the people of GOD (Matthew 28:18-20).

JUDGMENT

The Lord is the one who forms the human spirit and as Creator he will hold all of humans accountable. In this book he wears his military title, “Lord of Hosts” (Lord of armies/warfare). The enemies that oppressed Israel will be oppressed. The Lord of hosts is the one who will impose humility on the proud. They will be abased. He is the one who imposes humility on the proud resulting in everlasting peace and stability for his people (Zechariah 9,12, & 14). All of this indicates the future judgment of Babylon, which is the symbol for humanity’s corporate stance against God (as noted in the book of Revelation). They will be judged and the righteous will celebrate. God’s judgment is an act highly anticipated in scripture. Therefore it should be highly anticipated by us. Evil will be eradicated and creation redeemed.

At the destruction of Babylon the scriptures read:

“Rejoice over her (Babylon), you heavens!

Rejoice, you people of God!

Rejoice, apostles and prophets!

For God has judged her

with the judgment she imposed on you” (Rev. 18:20)

Again in the Psalms:

“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth,
burst into jubilant song with music;
make music to the Lord with the harp,
with the harp and the sound of singing,
with trumpets and the blast of the ram’s horn—
shout for joy before the Lord, the King.
Let the sea resound, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it.
Let the rivers clap their hands,
let the mountains sing together for joy;
let them sing before the Lord,
for he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples with equity” (Ps. 98:4-9; 96:10-13).

John speaks of seeing the Lord of hosts/warfare-Jesus:

“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war” (Rev. 19:11).

“Since we know what it is to fear the Lord we try to persuade others” (2 Cor. 5:11).

RESTORATION

The tribe of Judah will produce the Messiah (Revelation refers to him as the Lion of the tribe of Judah), he will be executed, but will return in power (Zechariah 6:12,13; 13:7; 12:10; 14:3). God will restore his treasured people, the apple of his eye. God’s people will suffer terribly at the hands of their enemies, but God will fight against the nations leveling them to the ground.

None will be proud before him and “the Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord and his name the only name.” His royal people, referred to as the house of David, will become like God (**Zechariah 14:9; 12:8**).

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS FOR ZECHARIAH

THE CALL-TURN BACK

1. What did you learn about God in this point?

THE PROMISE AND FAITHFULNESS

2. What did you learn about people in this passage?

JUDGMENT

3. How will you apply this point to your life?

RESTORATION

4. How will you apply this to help someone?
5. With whom, in particular, will you share these discoveries?