

ZECHARIAH 8

REVIEW...

- **Zechariah** – 38th book of the Old Testament – the 11th of what is known as the 12 Minor Prophets
 - In 520 B.C. – in the second year of King Darius the Great of the Medo-Persian Empire...
 - God raised up 2 prophets - Haggai / Zechariah (*remembered*) - to rebuild the Temple!
- **Zechariah is broken up into five sections:**
 - **Zechariah 1:1-6** - The first prophecy comes 2 months after the rebuilding the Temple began...
 - **Zechariah 1:7-6:15** - In the 11th month of the 2nd year of King Darius...
 - God gave a series of eight visions - all in one night – to the prophet!
 - 1st – the 4 horsemen / 2nd – the 4 horns / 3rd – the measuring tape / 4th – Joshua the priest
 - 5th - the golden Lampstand / 6th – flying scroll / 7th – woman in a basket...
 - The 8th and final vision – 4 chariots that came riding out between 2 bronze mountains...
 - The idea being these chariots came from God to wage war – bring judgment!
 - The chapter ended with the crowing of the High Priest – BOTH Priest and King – Jesus!
- **Zechariah 7-8** - Two years later God gave a Word about fasting...
 - The people came to the Altar – and asked whether they should still fast in the 5th month...
 - The 9th of Av (5th month) is a solemn fast in Israel to this day – destruction of both Temples...
 - God asked - did they fast for Him – or for themselves – the implied answer is it was for them!
 - It was not done out of a reverence for the Lord – it was just empty tradition!
 - So God answered - what the people should have done was obey the Word of the Lord...
 - If they had – they would not have ended up in captivity – the Temple would still be there!
 - But instead of listening – the people of Israel had shrugged their shoulders...
 - Or they plugged their ears – so the Word could not convict them...
 - It made their hearts like flint (*diamond*) – HARD – refusing to hear what the Spirit said!
 - Therefore because they refused to listen to the Lord – the Lord refused to listen to them!
- **Zechariah 9-11** – The first Burden addresses the first Advent of Christ
- **Zechariah 12-14** - The second Burden addresses the second Advent of Christ

THE END OF FASTING... (3 THINGS)

- **1ST – THE PROMISE... VS. 1-8**
 - 1st – The LORD of Hosts is ZEALOUS for Zion... vs. 1-3
 - Zion is the name of one of the mountains (*hills*) that Jerusalem sits on...
 - But it is often given as a reference to the city of Jerusalem as a whole...
 - The term ZEALOUS – is repeated 3 times in verse 2 – the Lord is VERY ZEALOUS!
 - I like the way the NTL puts it – ‘the Lord is consumed with passion for Jerusalem’!
 - They shrugged their shoulders / plugged their ears / had hearts as hard as flint...
 - But in spite the wickedness of the people - God WOULD NOT give up on them!
 - There is A VERY destructive doctrine commonly taught today in many churches...
 - It states – God has rejected Israel – and been replaced by the church...
 - **Galatians 6:16** – “Peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”
 - The reason is - because Israel betrayed and crucified Jesus Christ...
 - **Matthew 27:25** – “All the people... said, "His blood be on us and on our children.""
 - This doctrine has led to intense persecution of the Jews by the church over the centuries!
 - Yet in **Romans 11:1** - Paul uses himself as an example God is not done with Israel...
 - In fact all of the Apostles and everyone in the church up to **Acts 10** were Jews!

- They are proof that God has not rejected Israel – Jews were/are still being saved...
- Because God has not cast away Israel – He promised they would always be His people...
- As long as the sun rises – waves crash on the seashore – Israel is Gods nation!
- **Jeremiah 31:36** - “I am as likely to reject Israel as I am to do away with the laws of nature!”
- The Lord promised He would come back to Israel...
 - **Ezekiel 10:4/18** – the Glory of the Lord departed from the Temple...
 - **Ezekiel 11:23** – “and the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city...”
 - The presence of God – the Glory of the Lord - had abandoned Israel because of their sin!
 - But He would return to Zion – call the forsaken city of Jerusalem His home once again...
 - And when He did – Jerusalem would change – it would become the city of Truth...
 - It would become the Mountain of the LORD of Hosts / a Holy (*Kadosh*) mountain!
 - When we study the history of Israel – we find a sorted and often shameful past...
 - The people of God – were often anything but people who actually followed God...
 - But I LOVE the patience of God that is revealed in how He deals with Israel...
 - There are consequences to their actions and rebellion – but He never stops loving them!
 - In the same way we can frustrate the work of God in our live – loose His presence...
 - But He will never give up on us – and He is ALWAYS willing to come back...
 - All it takes is turning back to God – and we once again become the Home of the Lord!
 - He takes away all of our failures – and makes us Holy – set apart once more for Him!
- o 2nd – The restoration of Jerusalem... vs. 4-5
 - God promises to give two signs that He has returned:
 - Old men will once again sit in the streets of Jerusalem...
 - War / famine / and disease had plagued Israel because of their rebellion...
 - Making old age a rare trait among the people – most did not live to see their golden years...
 - But God would again bring back the men who are old enough to need canes to walk!
 - **Isaiah 65:20** - “No longer will adults die before they have lived a full life. No longer will people be considered old at one hundred!”
 - Since 1900 the average life span in America has increased by almost 30 years (*78 today*)...
 - A fact that most would credit to the prosperity and healthcare in the US...
 - But interestingly a statistic that has been on the decline the past few years
 - A long life is not the result of better medical care – or lots of money...
 - God is the one who keeps wars at bay - keeps disease / famine from culling a generation...
 - A long life is one of the signs of a blessing from God on a nation!
 - The streets will be full of young boys and girls playing in the street...
 - When there is strife in a land – people fear to let their children outside!
 - When I was a kid – we would leave the house at sunrise and not come back till sunset...
 - People did not fear for their children – they felt safe letting their kids out...
 - But sadly that is not the way it is today – the streets are empty...
 - People fear predators – wicked influences – a country besieged by corruption!
- o 3rd – The impossible – made possible... vs. 6-8
 - This promise seemed MARVELOUS (*impossible*) to the remnant of Israel...
 - A small rag tag group of refugees huddling in a the ruins of a rebellious city...
 - How could they be ‘the City of Truth’ – with young and old alike filling its streets!
 - But as impossible as it seemed to them – that did not make it look impossible to God!
 - God would bring His people home...
 - He would save His people from the lands to the east and west – return the Diaspora...
 - They would come back and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem...
 - They would again be His people – and He would be their God – in truth and righteousness!

- Since 1948 Jewish population in Israel has surged to over 6 million...
- There are more Jews living in Israel today than any other nation on earth...
- **Isaiah 43:5-6** – “I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west... Bring My sons from afar, And My daughters from the ends of the earth.”
- If we look at the MOUNUMENTAL problems in our lives – we become overwhelmed...
- We think it MARVELOUS when God says that He can heal / provide / rescue us...
- But the only reason we marvel is because we limit God to our abilities / understanding...
- He who created the universe with a word – has no limitations – if we will only run to Him!
- But it is worth noting the timing of the fulfillment – it did not happen in a moment!

▪ **2ND – THE COMMANDS... vs. 9-17**

o **1ST – Obey – and build the Temple... vs. 9-13**

- In the mean time - Lord commanded the people to let their hands be strong...
 - They had a part to play – they had a Temple that needed to be rebuilt...
 - They had been working on the Temple for 2 years – but had 2 years still to go – 516 BC...
 - And even though their eyes might not see the total fulfillment of the promise of the Lord...
 - As long as they obeyed the Lord – the blessing of the Lord would flow!
- Before they began to work on the Temple...
 - There was no work – no wages for either man or animal...
 - There was no peace – there were enemies on all sides – everyone against his neighbor...
 - There was no fruit – the people sowed but did not reap anything – **Haggai 5:5-7**
 - There was a curse – Judah was known among the nations for being CURSED!
 - We all know what it is like to fail in life – cursed - we have all experienced disappointment...
 - Maybe we have faced / or are facing – the frustration of always coming up short...
 - No matter what we do – not matter how hard we try – it just seems to fail!
 - The key to success in life – is putting things in their proper order...
 - We must learn to put God first – then we will find blessings from the Lord...
 - Blessings in life do not come from what we do – but who we know!
 - **Luke 12:31** – “Seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.”
 - **Psalms 1:3** – “Blessed is the man who delights in the Lord... whatever he does prospers.”
- But now that the work on the Temple was underway...
 - God would deal with His people the way He had in former / better times...
 - The harvest would be plentiful – because the Lord would rain down the dew...
 - God would save Israel – make them a symbol of BLESSINGS to the nations...
 - Therefore they had no reason to be afraid – instead their hands could be strong and build!
 - Not that God needed them to build the Temple - God did not need a building...
 - **Isaiah 66:1** – “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool...”
 - But God wanted His people to invest their lives in Him!
 - We talk a lot about volunteering – put an emphasis on plugging in at the church...
 - Not because God need our help – or because of some obligation to the church...
 - It is for our sakes – it is an opportunity for us to invest our time in the Lord!
 - That is why I love it when people step out – not because of a need (*God takes care of that*)...
 - But cause I know what it will do to their relationship with God – the blessings it will bring!
- o **2ND – Believe – and do not fear... vs. 14-15**
 - Just as God was determined to punish Israel when Israel rebelled and provoked him...
 - And He would not relent – there was no changing His mind!
 - Now God was determined to do good to Jerusalem – nothing was going to change His mind!
 - Therefore the people had no reason to fear – the second time God says ‘do not fear’!

- But notice the promise to not fear – is only for those who were investing in the Lord...
- We would do most anything to make sure our kids have everything they need...
- But we are not willing to make the same sacrifices for someone else's children!
- God does not give any promises to provide to those who belong to this world...
- But God does promises to take care of His kids - those who have faith in Jesus!
- But what does it mean to have faith – that is a bit of an ambiguous term...
- Perhaps a better word is TRUST – we have no reason to FEAR as long as we TRUST in Jesus!
- And there is ONLY ONE WAY to build trust – and that is to spend time with someone...
- Therefore the more time we spend with Jesus – the more we TRUST – the less we FEAR!
- **II Timothy 1:7** – “God has not given us a spirit of fear... but of power, love...”
- Jesus would say the same thing in **Luke 12:32** - ‘fear not’...
 - But He adds perspective why we should not fear - our Father does not just what we need...
 - He wants to give us His whole kingdom - bless us beyond imagination!
 - In Christ we have become heirs to all that God has - joint heirs with Jesus – **Romans 8:17**
 - To the extent we will even sit on Jesus throne with Him - **Revelation 3:21**
 - Are we sure – ABSOLUTELY – God will NOT CHANGE His mind!
 - Often times we are left to wonder if God can/will take care of our needs...
 - God does not just want to provide for our needs - we are heirs to His Kingdom!
- o 3rd – Walk – and be an example... vs. 16-17
 - It was not enough to just OBEY and BELIEVE...
 - God wanted His people to WALK as His children – be HOLY / be an example...
 - 1st - They were to tell the truth – each man to his neighbor...
 - In the world there are levels of lies - little lies / white lies / half truths...
 - But for us there is just the truth - and then there is a lie - no middle ground...
 - If we are not telling all of the truth - then we are telling a complete lie!
 - And there is ever a good reason not to tell the truth...
 - Such as if it keeps someone from having hurt feelings – ‘how do I look’ – ugly!
 - The end does not justify the means – it is as much about the journey as the destination...
 - There is never a good reason to lie – it is depending on our efforts / wisdom...
 - Better to be honest – tell the truth – and trust in/depend on the Lord!
 - 2nd - They were to give judgment in the gates (*speaking of the courts*)...
 - The judges were to judge in truth and justice – which would bring peace...
 - Because when there is true justice – the lawless fear / and the righteous rejoice!
 - **Proverbs 29:2** – “When the godly are in authority, the people rejoice. But when the wicked are in power, they groan.”
 - I laughed this this week when I read an article about recent legal decisions in California...
 - Convicts illegal immigrants were pardoned / but coffee was listed as dangerous!
 - Sometimes we wonder if there will ever be real justice – perhaps not in California...
 - But ultimately God will judge – fairly and righteously – the actions of all men...
 - So pray for those who are leaders – those entrusted with the justice of the nation...
 - Pray they will be righteous God fearing rulers – who listen to and obey God...
 - Pray because if they are not – they will be held accountable – **James 3:1**
 - 3rd - They were to not think/plot evil in your heart against your neighbor...
 - This particular command stands out – because it was not an action / but a thought...
 - They people were not just to be Holy in their actions – it was also in their thoughts!
 - Our minds are literally a battleground for the control of our actions – **Galatians 5:17**...
 - Do we choose to live for pleasure/the moment – or do we live for the Lord...
 - Many face constant defeat because they try and fight the war in their own strength...

- The only way to win the battle is to let Jesus fight for us...
- As we abide in Him - **John 15:4-5** - He fight and wins the war for us – makes us HOLY!
- 4th - They were not to give false oaths...
 - Those who do not know Jesus - do not tend to value their word...
 - They will often attempt to reinforce their word – to assure you they are not lying...
 - They will tell you what you want to hear - or even flat out lie to your face...
 - But God expects us to be men and women of our word...
 - We should not be taking oaths – we should just do what we say!
 - **Matthew 5:37** - “Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Anything beyond this is from the evil one.”
- 3rd – **THE RESULTS... vs. 18-23**
 - o 1st – The end of fasting... vs. 18-19
 - In answer to the original question from chapter 7 – should Israel still fast in the 5th month...
 - All of the fasts – 4 different months - commemorating aspects of the fall of Jerusalem...
 - 4th month – wall of Jerusalem– **II Kings 25:3**/ 5th month – Temple destroyed– **Jeremiah 52:12**
 - 7th month – death of Gedeliah- **II Kings 25:25** / 10th month – start of siege- **Jeremiah 52:4**
 - Would turn from fasts of mourning – into feasts of celebration! Love truth and Peace!
 - God has given us incredible promises – in spite of our failures and sin...
 - Too often we want to hold onto our past – mourn the dates of our failures...
 - But God wants to take those same dates and make them days of celebration...
 - Because it was through those failures that we learned to depend on Him!
 - It was through them we learned to – OBEY – and invest in the things of the Lord...
 - We learned we learned to – BELIEVE – and all of our fears were wiped out in perfect trust...
 - We learned to – WALK – and were made HOLY and an example as children of God!
 - **Isaiah 61:3** – “To give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning...”
 - o 2nd – Many will seek the Lord... vs. 20-23
 - In those days people from all over the world will come to Jerusalem...
 - People from one city will go to another city and say – let us go and pray / seek the Lord...
 - Many people – even from powerful nations – will come to seek the Lord...
 - In that day 10 men from different languages / nations – will grab the sleeve of a Jew...
 - Asking to go with him – because the they have heard God *is with them!*
 - Yalak (*we will go*) / Shama (*we have heard*) – Eloheem (*God*)!
 - **Isaiah 2:2** – “In the last days, the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem will become the most important place on earth. People from all over the world will go there to worship.”
 - When we WALK as HOLY children of God – people take notice...
 - Because they have no promises – yet we are blessed in whatever we do...
 - Because they are terrified by life – yet we have no fear...
 - Because we have God living in us – making us HOLY – setting us apart...
 - So although we live in this world – we are obviously not apart of this world...
 - We become a light – example – to those who are around us - **Matthew 5:1**
 - And they come up and tug on our sleeves – and ask to come with us to Jesus!