

Pastor Garys Service 9-1-24 AI

Your dear Father, we just ask you to continue to anoint, dear Father. We pray that the power of God would just move and administer to our hearts and lives. Help me, Father, I pray, to share hope. Dear God, as we speak and as we share, Father, we pray in the name of Jesus. Loosen the tongue of your servant and anoint these lips of clay so they would speak, dear God, that I could speak, dear Father, under your anointing and minister to the people's hearts and lives. We thank you, and we give you praise, and we give you glory, and we give you wonder in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen and Amen.

Praise God. Let's give the Lord an offering of praise, shall we? Thank you so much, worship team, Sister Marsha, Brother Dave, Judy, Susie, and everybody. Thank you so much.

This is our second lesson in Zechariah. Zechariah has 14 chapters, and there's a lot of content here. Our goal is not to go verse by verse. I can do that, and I've done that before, but I felt like people would enjoy an overview, focusing on the high points and some very interesting places we find in this book.

I have some preliminary material that sets the stage. I used it last week, so this is a reiteration from Chuck Swindoll, a very knowledgeable and learned theologian. He has some things to say about Zechariah's ministry, so I want to read this to you, and then we can get started with the rest of the lesson.

Zechariah's visions are dated, which is interesting because, if you start looking at the first chapter of Zechariah, it actually tells you exactly when the first part of his visions were shared. Chapter 1 says, "In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo," and then it goes on from there. These are dated visions that God gave him. The messages in Chapters 1 through 8 all take place in the same general period that Haggai's two chapters came about, beginning in October through November of 520 BC, with the call for the people of Judah to repent.

Zechariah 1:1 mentions that he received eight visions on a restless night in February 15th, 519 BC. This is listed in verse 7 of Chapter 1, followed by four messages that he preached on December 7th, 518 BC. So, it's all around 520 to 518 BC that the first part of the Book of Zechariah was written as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit. His final messages, in Chapters 9 through 14, go undated, and it's assumed that these were probably given by the Lord later on in Zechariah's life.

One of the things that suggests a later date is the mention of Greece in Chapter 9, verse 13. This mention of Greece suggests that his prophecies came later. Zechariah was a young man, unlike Haggai, who was older, and so he was able to have a public ministry and the strength to do this well into the 5th century BC. Some suggest that the latter part of this book was written as late as 480 BC, which would have been just before Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra was around 458

BC, and Nehemiah was 444 BC. God was letting His people know there were certain things they needed to do.

As I said last week, these were not terrible sinners or people who were out in idolatry like their forefathers. These people weren't committing blasphemous things or idolatrous practices that led to the 70-year captivity in Babylon. The four kings between 606 and 585 BC were all descendants of King Josiah, who had been a very righteous king, but they led the people of Judah into horrible sin again. Never discount the importance of a leader. A godly leader can lead a nation well, while an ungodly leader can lead people away from God.

Zechariah was talking to people who had not gone into horrible idolatry. These were people motivated to serve God. Fifty thousand of them had gone back to Jerusalem at the admonition of the Persian king Cyrus, who had been moved by God to send people back to build a place of worship for the Most High God. But almost 20 years later, they had lost their fervor, gotten discouraged, and stopped building the temple from the foundation up.

Cyrus had them come back to build a temple for the worship of Yahweh, but life happened, and they got discouraged. They weren't walking by faith anymore. They had gone backward in their walk with the Lord, which brings up an interesting thought. When I was young, I heard old preachers say, "If you're not moving forward, you're moving backward." I believe there's truth in that—we've got to keep pushing forward. The Apostle Paul says, "I press forward toward the mark of the high calling of God." These folks weren't pressing forward, so God wanted them to repent, get their lives right, and rekindle the fire and fervor in their hearts.

This is similar to what we see in the church today. People get saved, and everything is wonderful, but life happens, and they lose their fervor. They might not be involved in blatant sin, but they've lost their trust in God and their faith. That's what God wanted them to repent of in Chapter 1.

Now, as we get into Chapter 2, there's a very exciting and positive tone in Zechariah's prophecy. God is talking about the good things that are going to happen as the people have gotten their lives right. Zechariah 2:1-5 says, "I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then I said, 'Where are you going?' And he said to me, 'To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and its length.' And behold, the angel who talked with me came forward, and another angel came forward to meet him and said to him, 'Run, say to that young man, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls because of the multitude of people and livestock in it. And I will be to her a wall of fire all around,' declares the Lord, 'and I will be the glory in her midst.'"

Isn't that exciting? There was repentance, and now God is saying, "I am going to bless you." The measuring line was symbolic of the blessings of God that were coming. Notice the verbiage—"to measure Jerusalem, to see what the width and the length is." And then God says, "Run, say to that young man." I think of God's enthusiasm to minister to us. Some people think we serve an angry God, but no—God wants us so badly that He runs to us.

Remember the story of the prodigal son? The father ran to meet him, put a robe on him, and said, "Put the ring on his finger." God wants us so badly that He runs to us when we repent. So, repentance brings blessings, as people turn their trust back to the Lord. This is the Lord's blessing promised after their repentance.

The next verses, 6 through 13, talk about God making a call to come back to Zion. He tells the Jews who had been spread abroad due to their sin of idolatry to come back. Only 50,000 had returned, but there were probably millions spread throughout the Babylonian Empire. God makes a plea for them to come back because He was going to judge the nation that had plundered them. He says, "You need to get out of there because things are going to go bad."

Then He talks about singing and rejoicing. This is a time to rejoice because God is restoring what had been taken. This is why we have worship time, why we sing and praise the Lord. It's not just to fill time—it's to praise the Lord and show Him our gratitude. We worship because it is praise to the Lord.

Look at Zechariah 2:8-9: "For thus says the Lord of hosts: After glory, He has sent me against the nations which plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye. For behold, I will wave my hand over them so that they will be plundered for their slaves."

God is telling them to get out of Babylon, the old Babylonian Empire. Get away from there and come home because judgment is coming. And remember, you are the apple of God's eye. God looks at us with a love that is incomprehensible to us. We are very, very important to Him. So, let us rejoice and praise the Lord, for His blessings are upon us.

For thus says the Lord of hosts, after glory, He has sent me against the nations which plundered you. For he who touches you touches the apple of my eye. And then He says, "For behold, I will wave my hand over them so that they will be plundered for their slaves."

So, He's saying here, "I'm going to judge them, and the tables will be turned. They thought they were going to plunder you, but they will be plundered themselves."

Then He goes on to say, "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," says the Lord. "Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you."

And the Lord will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land and will again choose Jerusalem. Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord, for He is aroused from His holy habitation.

In other words, God is saying, "I am moving. I am working in your midst. I'm going to do something special. I'm going to do something mighty." And you know, when God is working, when God is moving, it's time for us to get serious. It's time for us to get on our knees and seek His face, and it's time for us to trust Him and believe that He is going to do what He said He would do.

The Lord says, "I will dwell in your midst." You know, that's the thing we need to hold on to. When we're going through tough times, when we're going through struggles and difficulties, we need to remember that the Lord is with us. He's not just out there somewhere, distant and uninvolved. He is with us. He dwells in our midst, and He is working on our behalf.

So let's trust Him, let's believe Him, and let's move forward in faith, knowing that He is going to do great things. The Lord has great plans for us, just as He did for the people of Israel. He has plans to bless us, to prosper us, and to give us a future filled with hope.

Let's close in prayer:

Lord, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You for the promises that You have given us. We thank You, Lord, that You are with us, that You dwell in our midst, and that You are working on our behalf. Help us, Lord, to trust You, to walk by faith, and to keep our eyes fixed on You.

We give You all the praise, all the glory, and all the honor. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.