

## Unit III: Called to God's Work of Justice

# A New Day Is Coming!

DEVOTIONAL READING: Zechariah 8:18-23

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Zechariah 8

PRINT PASSAGE: Zechariah 8:1-8, 11-17

**Key Verse—** So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not. (Zechariah 8:15, KJV)

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“So now I have determined to do good again to Jerusalem and Judah. Do not be afraid.” (Zechariah 8:15, NIV)

### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Comprehend the impact of God's presence in a community.
- Yearn for God's perpetual presence and the promise of justice it brings.
- Pray for God's presence to result in a communal sense of justice, prosperity, and unity.

### \*Key Terms

**Blessing** (verse 13)—Hebrew: *berakah* (ber-aw-kaw'): a blessing; gift; to be generous.

**Dwell** (verse 3)—Hebrew: *yashab* (yä•shav'): to abide, sit, remain, establish.

**Remnant** (verse 6)—Hebrew: *sheerith* (sheh-ay-reeth'): rest; residue; remainder.

\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

### Life Happens

Having been diagnosed with cancer and after enduring the two-year battle of chemotherapy and treatment, Felicia was thankful to be in remission. Felicia says, “Cancer is a burden not just for the patient, but for the entire family.”

Her family is elated about this good news regarding Felicia's health, but these past two years had been toilsome on them as well. Felicia's daughter, Ramona, struggles with anxiety now. Ramona was the one who took Felicia to her chemo and radiation appointments and provided consistent care. Ramona was strong yet hated seeing her mom in that condition. To relieve the stress, Ramona started running, which keeps her anxiety in check.

Felicia's son, Cedric, had started to drink alcohol excessively. To cope, he initially drank to fall asleep at night. However, over time, he progressed to drinking in the morning and throughout



## Overview

The historical setting for this lesson is around 520 BC, during Cyrus's reign over Babylon/Persia. He freed God's people from exile, allowing them to return to their homeland of Jerusalem. There were 45,000 to 50,000 returning from exile. About fifteen years after the Jews had returned to their homeland, God called Zechariah to encourage His people to trust Him and His faithfulness. Zechariah, meaning "Yahweh remembers," was a prophet who prophesied the renewal of the Jews after bondage. God had a special way of communicating with Zechariah, which was through beautiful visions of Zion. The new Jerusalem will be cleansed, and their new beginnings will be in their original land with His presence. He promised that peace in the Holy Land will come with prosperity. Also, Zechariah predicted what would take place during the millennial age (the coming of the Messiah). Zechariah explained that their bondage under the Babylonians was a result of their disobedience to the Lord. However, if they remained faithful and obeyed God's Word, then He would bless them and their land tremendously. The prophet wanted the Jews to focus on the glory of God and start rebuilding the Temple immediately and see it completed as well.

the day. In trying not to prolong the problem and to be a better support system for his mom, Cedric sought counseling. He meets with his therapist once a week and feels better expressing his emotions in this way.

Now the family is embracing their new normal and is grateful for the better days ahead.

## Questions

1. What is something that you have been diagnosed with that impacted the whole family?
2. In what ways have you and/or your family been able to cope in a productive way?
3. How has your faith made you whole?

## COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### Good Times Are Coming (Zechariah 8:1-8)

#### KJV

**AGAIN THE word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying,**

**2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.**

**3 Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.**

**4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age.**

**5 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.**

**6 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the**

**eyes of the *remnant* of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts.**

**7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country;**

**8 And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.**

## NIV

THE WORD of the LORD Almighty came to me.

2 This is what the LORD Almighty says: “I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her.”

3 This is what the LORD says: “I will return to Zion and  *dwell*  in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City, and the mountain of the LORD Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain.”

4 This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each of them with cane in hand because of their age.


5 “The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there.”

6 This is what the LORD Almighty says: “It may seem marvelous to the *remnant* of this people at that time, but will it seem marvelous to me?” declares the LORD Almighty.

7 This is what the LORD Almighty says: “I will save my people from the countries of the east and the west.

8 “I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God.”

God spoke to Zechariah through visions, showing him exactly what was going to happen to his beloved people and their land. The Lord wanted Zechariah to explain exactly what was going to take place if they listened and obeyed. “The word of the LORD Almighty came to me” (**verse 1**). Zechariah delivered God’s promise of a new day of peace and prosperity to His people. Also, Zechariah reminded them that God is a jealous Father, and He loves His children like no other (**verse 2**). Jerusalem (which is Zion) will be the dwelling place for the Lord. He is going to restore everything His people lost. **Verse 3a** again emphasizes the fact that this communication was coming from the Lord. Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City because of God’s faithfulness to His people (**verse 3b**). The mountain of the Lord will be called the Holy Mountain (**verse 3c**). The Faithful City and Holy Mountain are additional names for Jerusalem and the Temple or Mt. Moriah (where the Messiah would soon be coming). Zechariah further explained in **verse 4** that Jerusalem will be a blessed city, noting the people will enjoy longevity. Furthermore, the great city will be filled with young children having a good time because of the presence of the Lord (**verse 5**). The city will be safe and secure. Oh, what a good time that is coming in that great New Jerusalem! It is on the way because nothing is too difficult for the Lord. Moreover, the Jews had become so accustomed to being enslaved that they had a rough time believing that God was capable of such a blessing. However, the Lord declared that He is almighty and would do just what He said—save the few who were faithful and worshipped, trusted, and believed in Him. What He would do may appear to be marvelous and unbelievable, but He is God and has the power to bring to pass all that He envisioned (**verse 6**). He promised to be faithful to the ones that trusted Him. God loves us, and He will return to gather His faithful ones to go live with Him in Zion (**verses 7-8**). It is our job to maintain justice and faithfulness until He comes back. God is going to return, and we all need to get prepared for His coming. It is going to be a great day for the ones that remain faithful unto Him.

 **What Do You Think?** We attend church to worship God and learn His Word, which helps us increase our trust and faith in Him. But outside the church walls, how can we increase our trust in God’s faithfulness toward us?



## When the Tables Turn (*Zechariah 8:11-13*)

### KJV

11 But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts.

12 For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.

13 And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a *blessing*: fear not, but let your hands be strong.

### NIV

11 “But now I will not deal with the remnant of this people as I did in the past,” declares the LORD Almighty.

12 “The seed will grow well, the vine will yield its fruit, the ground will produce its crops, and the heavens will drop their dew. I will give all these things as an inheritance to the remnant of this people.

13 “Just as you, Judah and Israel, have been a curse among the nations, so I will save you, and you will be a *blessing*. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong.”

The “residue” and “remnant” were the few who still trusted and believed in Him (**verse 11**). God promised peace and prosperity, and to give them everything they could hope for. God was going to grant them peace; their fruit and crops would increase by the dew of the Lord. This was the opposite of what they were used to while in captivity (**verse 12**). **Verse 13** is a very important message; God showed Zechariah a vision of great wealth for those who trusted Him. Zechariah preached deliverance and how things were going to turn around for the people’s good. The tables would be turned, and everything would be totally different from what they were accustomed to while in bondage. Judah and Israel’s hearts and minds had to be changed before they were capable of completing His work. The Jewish people’s way of life did not reflect the holiness of God. They were not faithful to Yahweh or His covenant. The descendants of Abraham were not being true to what their ancestors had taught them. And God was the only one that could change them. His faithfulness and love for His people would not allow them to stay broken. Besides, they could not meet the requirements if they had not first been changed. Zechariah preached encouragement to trust and to rebuild the Temple of God. They were now a blessing to the lost nations and examples of how once again to be the children of God and represent Him as their forefathers had taught them to do.

During our brokenness, God is always up to something. We must remain true to Him and obey His Word, even when we are going through rough times. God will bring us out of whatever we are going through. Remember that the first shall be last and the last shall be first in the Day of the Lord.

 **What Do You Think?** Take a moment to reflect on a bad situation God turned around and worked out for your good. Now testify.

## Let the Truth Be Told (*Zechariah 8:14-17*)

### KJV

14 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not:

15 So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.

16 These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:

17 And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.

### NIV

14 This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Just as I had determined to bring disaster on you and showed no pity when your ancestors angered me,” says the LORD Almighty,


15 “so now I have determined to do good again to Jerusalem and Judah. Do not be afraid.

16 “These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts;

17 “do not plot evil against each other, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this,” declares the LORD.

Although God’s people deserved to be punished for their disobedience, God was patient with them and showed mercy. Unlike with their forefathers, to whom God did not show mercy, and who were punished for their wrongdoings (**verse 14**), God would have a change of heart. **Verse 15** affirmed God’s change of heart when He told His people through the prophet that God would restore Jerusalem and Judah. He had plans to bless them. Moreover, in order for them to receive their blessings God gave them strict instructions through Zechariah. The prophet preached and told them exactly what God expected from them. They were to speak the truth and witness to others about the goodness of God. They were to speak the truth in the high courts and social events (**verse 16**). Zechariah wanted the truth to be told, starting from the high priests and judges down to the lowest of the common people. Yahweh wanted everyone to be treated fairly. In addition, He wanted them to live justly and not do evil to each other but love one another—for God is love and He loves us (**verse 17**). God hates the sin, not the sinner. Zechariah warned the Jews to put away those things that were not pleasing in the eyesight of God. This also applies to us today. We are to continue to obey God’s Word and treat our fellow man with justice—for we are to be a blessing to the world not a curse (see Genesis 12:3).

As Christians today, we must hold fast to the hope that when Christ returns He will bring peace and prosperity across the land. Let’s study and memorize Proverbs 6:16-19 and apply it to our everyday lives as what *not* to do to get on God’s bad side. However, turn the tables and exchange those acts of hate for acts of peace, love, and justice.


 **What Do You Think?** What are some ways in which pastors/leaders of the church create an environment where nonbelievers feel welcomed and free to engage with the Good News of Jesus?

# Your Life

In our lives, we all desire peace and prosperity; however, we know there will be times of disappointments and setbacks. Our goal is to keep trusting God’s faithfulness to help us reach our mark.

# Your World!

In our world today, there is so much evil present on a daily basis. As believers, we must continue to pray without ceasing and encourage one another that God will bring justice to this dying land.

 **Closing Prayer** O faithful God, we pause to say thank You for never leaving our side through all situations and circumstances. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

## Home Daily Bible Readings

<b>MONDAY</b> , May 11	“Seeking Divine Help in Troubled Times”	(Psalm 86:1-13)
<b>TUESDAY</b> , May 12	“Land Now Belongs to Babylon”	(Jeremiah 27:1-11)
<b>WEDNESDAY</b> , May 13	“Choose to Love and Obey the Lord”	(Deuteronomy 30:15-20)
<b>THURSDAY</b> , May 14	“Surrender and the People Will Live”	(Jeremiah 38:14-18)
<b>FRIDAY</b> , May 15	“Jerusalem Will Fall”	(Jeremiah 21:1-7)
<b>SATURDAY</b> , May 16	“Jerusalem Is Defeated and Zedekiah Is Exiled”	(2 Kings 24:20b–25:7)
<b>SUNDAY</b> , May 17	“Choose the Life of Justice”	(Jeremiah 21:8-14)

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