Zechariah 8:14-17

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

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***Zechariah 8:14–17***For thus says YHWH **tseva’ot**: “As I purposed to bring disaster to you when your fathers provoked me to wrath, and I did not relent, says YHWH **tseva’ot**, so again have I purposed in these days to bring good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah; fear not. These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares YHWH.”

1. For review, summarize the message of prior verses in the chapter, Zech 8:1-8 and Zech 8:9-13.

Chapter 8 is still part of the “answer” to the question about fasting from the beginning of Chapter 7.

Zech 8:1-8. YHWH will totally and fully restore Jerusalem and His people. He will return to them, and live in their midst in Jerusalem. There will be peace and prosperity in the land like never before. And it will be marvelous for both God and man. That is what lies ahead! That is the “light at the end of the tunnel.”

Zech 8:9-13. People, get back to work on the temple! Great things are going to happen if you are obedient. The Seed of Peace, the Prince of Peace, is going to initiate the Covenant of Peace. And there will be peace and prosperity in our land for that remnant that chooses to obey. God will bring salvation to that remnant and you will be a blessing to all the nations, finally fulfilling the promise made so long ago to your father Abraham.

1. YHWH says he purposed to bring “disaster” upon His people. Why?

Generation after generation (their fathers) continually disobeyed, provoking God to anger.

1. The word “disaster” is actually the Hebrew רָעַע **ra’a’** “evil, harm”. This same word is translated as “harm” by the ESV in Jer 31:28. Look up that reference, and note the similarity to the message of Zechariah. Then keep reading the next few verses in Jer 31 and note the context regarding what God will do after he “brings harm”. How does the context of the Jeremiah passage relate to the overall context and message of the Zechariah passage?

***Jeremiah 31:28***And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and **bring harm,** so I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares the Lord.

Jeremiah prophesied that YHWH would bring harm/disaster upon His people. Zechariah, centuries later, recalls this prophesy, and basically says, “See, that came true!”.

Furthermore, the context in Jeremiah is that after God brings harm, he will establish a new covenant, and write the Torah on their hearts, and remember their sin no more. Likewise the context of Zechariah is that after God does harm, he will then bring peace and prosperity, as part of the Covenant of Peace brought by the Seed of Peace.

It’s almost like these two prophets are saying the same thing! Perhaps they are hearing from the same Elohim, the one who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

1. Why does YHWH say “fear not” in Zech 8:15? Recall he said the same thing in Zech 8:13. What concrete evidence do they have that they should they believe these words of YHWH are true?

He says fear not, meaning, you can be sure, I will do this. You don’t have to fear. I will do as I promised. How do you know? I promised to bring disaster upon you (as in Jer 31:28) because of the disobedience of your fathers, and I did so, as you know. So you can also know that what I am promising now (which was also the rest of the prophesy of Jer 31:28), I will also do for that remnant that chooses to walk in obedience to me.

1. List the expectations of YHWH for his people?

* speak truth to one another
* render true judgments
* work toward peace
* do not devise evil in your hearts
* love no false oath

1. What does it mean to “render judgments in your gates”? What were city gates used for? Note 2 Sam 19:8, 1 Kings 22:10, Jer 38:7, and Esther 6:10.

***2 Samuel 19:8***Then the king arose and took his seat in the gate. And the people were all told, “Behold, the king is sitting in the gate.” And all the people came before the king. Now Israel had fled every man to his own home.

***1 Kings 22:10***Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets were prophesying before them.

***Jeremiah 38:7***When Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, a eunuch who was in the king’s house, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern—the king was sitting in the Benjamin Gate.

***Esther 6:10***Then the king said to Haman, “Hurry; take the robes and the horse, as you have said, and do so to Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king’s gate. Leave out nothing that you have mentioned.”

Officials would sit at the city gates to judge or mediate problems that the people would bring. It was like the “county courthouse”. There should be no bribery or false motives in the decision making. Decisions should be just and true.

1. In Zech 8:17, what is the difference between “speaking truth to one another” and “loving no false oath”? See also Zech 5:4.

Recall the context of Zech 5:4. This was the curse of the flying scroll going out to punish all those who were not obedient to the Word of God.

***Zechariah 5:4***I will send it out, declares the YHWH **tseva’ot**, and it shall enter the house of the thief, and the house of him who **swears falsely by my name**. And it shall remain in his house and consume it, both timber and stones.”

Speaking truth to one another is clear general statement about speaking truthfully to other. But what about “loving no false oath”? This is not just speech, but rather a binding statement, promise or testimony. An oath is a specific promise to do something, often a sworn promise with consequences if not done, or a legal testimony that a statement is true. Often an oath is made in the name of a god or even in the name of YHWH. The Father want to protect his good name. He is Truth. He also wants the established judicial system of His people to be fair and just. His people are called by His name, and should reflect his qualities, representing Him in truth and honesty.

1. Look back at Zech 7:9-10 and recall what YHWH said he wanted from the people, when they asked whether they should continue to fast in remembrance of the destruction of the temple. How is that list similar to this one in Zech 8:16-17? What do we learn about the Father’s heart, and what he truly desires to see in His people?

***Zechariah 7:9–10***“Thus says YHWH **tseva’ot**, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.”

He wants to see in us honesty, truthfulness, peace-loving, treating others with goodness and kindness, especially those in need and those who aren’t in a good position to take care of themselves.

He wants us to obey out of a heart that truly wants to love Him and love others.

1. What keeps us from living this way?

Selfishness. There is no room for selfishness in a disciple of Yeshua. The Father and the Son were totally selfless in demonstrating their love for us.

Other reasons could be pride, sin, and lack of understanding of what God has truly done for us.

1. What is the main point of this passage? How would you summarize the message here?

YHWH is placing qualifications on what is expected of those who are to be a part of his blessing. His promises are sure, but they are not for everyone. The peace and prosperity promised are for the faithful remnant. Those will be the ones who live lives in heart-felt obedience to YHWH, loving others in an honest and selfless manner.

1. What do you personally take away from your study of this passage?