Zechariah 8:1-8

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

Wyn Laidig

February 2016

***Zechariah 8:1–8***And the word of YHWH **tseva’ot** came, saying, “Thus says YHWH **tseva’ot**: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. Thus says YHWH: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of YHWH **tseva’ot**, the holy mountain. Thus says YHWH **tseva’ot**: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of great age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. Thus says YHWH **tseva’ot**: If it is marvelous in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, should it also be marvelous in my sight, declares YHWH **tseva’ot**? Thus says YHWH **tseva’ot**: Behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country, and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.”

1. Chapter 8 seems to build upon the message of Chapter 7. Summarize the main point of Zech 7.

Their forefathers were warned over and over again, through the Torah and from the prophets, but they were stubborn and refused to obey. God was patient for a long time, but eventually He became angry and punished the entire nation. The same thing is going to happen again if the people don’t turn their hearts back to God and truly worship Him as he asks.

1. Notice how often Zechariah uses the name YHWH **tseva’ot.** Recall our discussion of the meaning of this name in Chapter 1. Why do you think Zechariah uses this name so much? What is he trying to emphasize in this passage?

YHWH is the master of everything… all creation, both in heaven and on the earth. He is in ultimate control and authority over ALL things, including people. When HE speaks, we had better listen and obey.

1. In Zech 8:1 the word “jealous” (Hebrew קָנָא **kana’**) is used 3 times. Recall Zech 1:14 as well. What does this term imply? Why is YHWH “exceedingly jealous with great anger”?

***Zechariah 1:14***So the angel who talked with me said to me, ‘Cry out, Thus says YHWH **tseva’ot**: I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion.

Think of a husband being jealous of a wife who flirts with another man. He desires ALL her love. And if she goes off with another man, and begins to give him her devotion, his jealously turns to anger. YHWH desires our complete devotion, not just part of it. The people in Zechariah’s day (and their fore fathers) had ignored the commands of YHWH, no longer serving Him with ALL their hearts. And so YHWH was jealous and angry, and separated them from the promised land and His presence.

1. What is the difference between Zion and Jerusalem?

Often these terms are used synonymously. However, Zion (or Mt. Zion) is actually the area (hill) where the temple was located. It was the “heart” of Jerusalem, and the spiritual center. The city of Jerusalem encompassed a larger area which included Mt Zion.

1. Chapter 8 is very prophetic. It is sometimes hard to tell what part of the prophesy will be accomplished in the “near term” versus when the prophesy is referring to the end times and final days of judgment when Messiah returns. We see evidence of both in Zech 8:3 when we look at the tenses (past tense or future tense) of the verbs: have returned, will dwell, shall be called. What do you learn from looking at the different tenses in this verse?

YHWH **has already returned** to Zion. He is there now with His people. This should be a great encouragement to them. Furthermore, He **WILL again dwell** in the holy of holies of the temple as soon as it’s construction is completed. This is clearly “near term” prophesy. And at some point we are told that Jerusalem **will be called** a faithful city. Looking back from today’s perspective, it is hard to find a time when Jerusalem could be called a faithful city, so we conclude that this aspect of the prophesy must have to a more distant future fulfillment. As we read on in this chapter it becomes more clear that much of this prophesy relates to the end times.

1. What is being communicated in Zech 8:4 by saying that “old men and women will sit in the streets with staff in hand because of their old age?”

People will be able to live a full life. They won’t die young because of war or famine. They will walk with canes because they are blessed to live such a long and good life in Jerusalem.

1. Likewise, what is the point of saying that “boys and girls will be playing in the streets?”

It will be a safe place for children and families. Life will be pleasant and enjoyable in Jerusalem.

1. Do you think Zech 8:4-5 are near-term or far-term prophesies? Why?

Far term… it doesn’t seem like Jerusalem has ever been a safe place, then or now. This won’t happen until the Messiah returns and establishes his kingdom there.

1. What is the meaning of Zech 8:6? Why is it “marvelous in His sight?” What does this tell us about the Father’s love for His children (including us!)?

If the peace, prosperity, and long life will seem wonderful to the people themselves, how much more so will this be wonderful to the Father, to see His children prospering as a result of their good choices and His subsequent blessing. YHWH loves to be able to bless his children!

1. In Zech 8:9, what might it signify when YHWH speaks of saving his people “from the east country and the west country?” Usually Israel’s enemies come from the north (Assyria & Mesopotamia) and the south (Egypt), but here we have east and west. What picture might this be hinting at? Look also at Ps 107:3, Is 43:5, and Ezek 37:21.

***Psalm 107:2–3***Let the redeemed of YHWH say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

***Isaiah 43:5–6***Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth,

***Ezekiel 37:21***Thus says the Adonai YHWH: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land.

He is talking about regathering His people from the ends of the earth. They have been scattered far and wide, and he will bring them back together. Perhaps this refers to the rising of the sun in the east and setting of the sun in the west. In other words, he gathers them from one end of the earth to the other.

1. Zech 8:7-8 speaks of gathering YHWH’s people from all the ends of the earth to dwell in Jerusalem again. How many people returned to Jerusalem during Zechariah’s time? How about today? Is this near or far term prophesy?

Only a small fraction of the people returned during Zechariah’s time, and ever since then as well. YHWH’s people are still scattered over the globe yet today.

1. The phrase in Zech 8:8 “they shall be my people and I will be their God” was first recorded for us in Exodus 6:7. Also see Exodus 29:45-46. What were the circumstances then, and how was that time a foreshadowing of the time Zechariah is now prophesying about?

***Exodus 6:7***I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am YHWH your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

***Exodus 29:45–46***I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am YHWH their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am YHWH their God.

This phrase recalls God gathering his people from slavery in Egypt and bringing them into the promised land, where He would dwell with them. The exodus picture is a foreshadow of the end times, when YHWH will again, through the Messiah’s return, gather his people from the ends of the earth, and establish his Kingdom in the promised land where He will again dwell in the midst of His people.

1. The phrase “they shall be my people and I will be their God” is also used in many prophetic passages, often in the context of a new and everlasting covenant, such as Ezek 36:24-28, Ezek 37:23-28, Jer 31:31-33, Jer 32:37-40, Jer 30:17 - 31:1. What would the use of this phrase have meant to the people of Zechariah’s day hearing this prophesy?

***Ezekiel 36:24–28***I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and **you shall be my people, and I will be your God.**

***Ezekiel 37:23–28***They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and **they shall be my people, and I will be their God**. “My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children’s children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. I will make a **covenant of peace** with them. It shall be an **everlasting covenant** with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them, and **I will be their God, and they shall be my people.** Then the nations will know that I am YHWH who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.”

***Jeremiah 31:31–33***Behold, the days are coming, declares YHWH, when I will make **a new covenant** with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares YHWH. **For this is the covenant** that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares YHWH: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. **And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**

***Jeremiah 32:37–40***Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. **And they shall be my people, and I will be their God**. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them **an everlasting covenant,** that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

***Jeremiah 30:17–31:1***For I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, declares YHWH, because they have called you an outcast: ‘It is Zion, for whom no one cares!’ “Thus says YHWH: Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob and have compassion on his dwellings; the city shall be rebuilt on its mound, and the palace shall stand where it used to be. Out of them shall come songs of thanksgiving, and the voices of those who celebrate. I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will make them honored, and they shall not be small. Their children shall be as they were of old, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all who oppress them. Their prince shall be one of themselves; their ruler shall come out from their midst; I will make him draw near, and he shall approach me, for who would dare of himself to approach me? declares YHWH. **And you shall be my people, and I will be your God.**” Behold the storm of YHWH! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of YHWH will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intentions of his mind. In the latter days you will understand this. “At that time, declares YHWH, **I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people.**”

These are clearly end-times passages, and passages referring to the new covenant. Recall that while the new covenant was clearly initiated with the Messiah’s death and resurrection, based on the description of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 it is not fully in place and will not be until the messiah returns in the end times.

This phrase would have signaled to the people that the end times were being discussed. In those future days, YHWH would reunite his people and bring judgment upon the rest of the nations. Just like He brought his people out of Egypt and brought judgment upon Egypt. However what will take place in the end times will be on a worldwide scale.

1. Zech 8:8 uses the phase “faithfulness and righteousness”. This is translated from the Hebrew אֱמֶת **‘emet** “truth, trustworthiness, faithfulness” and צְדָקָה **tsedakah** “justice, honesty, righteousness”. Compare to Isaiah 48:1 where Isaiah speaks a warning to those who claim to be God’s people but are not walking in **‘emet** and **tsedakah.** Also to Isaiah 1:25-26 where these same two words describe the restored people in the end times. Does Zechariah use these two terms to describe God or God’s people? How do these passages (both in Zechariah and Isaiah) help us understand how and why are to live this way?

It seems like Zechariah is using these terms to refer to God, rather than his people. But in the verses below, the same terms are used in reference to God’s people:

***Isaiah 48:1***Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and who came from the waters of Judah, who swear by the name of YHWH and confess the God of Israel, **but not in truth or right.**

***Isaiah 1:25–26***I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy. And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the **city of righteousness, the faithful city**.”

God is our example. He is **‘emet** and **tsedakah** in his relationship to us. He created us in His image, and He desires us to walk in **‘emet** and **tsedakah** in our relationship with Him as well.

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