Zechariah 8:9-13

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

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***Zechariah 8:9–13***Thus says YHWH **tseva’ot**: “Let your hands be strong, you who in these days have been hearing these words from the mouth of the prophets who were present on the day that the foundation of the house of YHWH **tseva’ot** was laid, that the temple might be built. For before those days there was no wage for man or any wage for beast, neither was there any safety from the foe for him who went out or came in, for I set every man against his neighbor. But now I will not deal with the remnant of this people as in the former days, declares YHWH **tseva’ot**. For there shall be a sowing of peace. The vine shall give its fruit, and the ground shall give its produce, and the heavens shall give their dew. And I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And as you have been a byword of cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing. Fear not, but let your hands be strong.”

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

YHWH will totally and fully restore Jerusalem and His people. He will return to them, and a 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.”

1. In light of the message of Zech 8:1-8, what is YHWH now telling the people to do in Zech 1:9, and why? Have we heard this message before? Why is he repeating it?

“Let your hands be strong that the temple might be built.” It had been 4 years since they started building the temple and it still wasn’t completed. The people had taken their eyes off their task.

It’s the same message we heard in several times in the previous 8 visions of Zech 1-6, about two years earlier. The message is probably being repeated because the people still didn’t heed the prior warnings.

1. To what group of people is YHWH speaking in Zech 1:9? How is that also a message to us today?

He is specifically speaking to those “who heard the prophets when the foundation was being started”. These were the ones who were there at the beginning. They heard the message from YHWH. They should be leading the others. They, more than any of the other people, should be leading the charge since they heard directly from YHWH.

That also challenges me. When have I felt YHWH speaking to me and not followed through with action? When have I heard the Truth and not been an effective leader in encouraging others to walk in that path of Truth as well? We who have been blessed to know YHWH and hear is words, also have a responsibility to lead others in His path.

1. From Zech 8:10, what did life used to be like in the “good old days” prior to the beginning of the temple reconstruction? Why do you think YHWH is reminding them of this?

Life was hard. Those “good old days” were not so good! No work was available. No one needed, or could pay to hire either workers or their work animals. There was no security in the land as well. People were poor and unsafe.

YHWH probably reminds them of this for three reasons. First, so they recall how bad it really was at that time. Second, to contrast those times with the present times which are better (things so much better now that the people are now building their own houses and focused on doing their own things), as well as with the future times that are being prophesied in the next verses (Zech 8:11-12). And third, because he wants them to realize **why** those times were so hard – because their forefathers were disobedient to the commands of YHWH.

1. In Zech 8:10 it seems at first surprising that YHWH says “**I set** every man against his neighbor”? Why does He say this? Were those times of the past just hard times, or were they actually directed by God? What period time is probably being referred to?

YHWH says He directed this, so he is not just referring to general hard times before the temple was rebuilt. It seems YHWH is referring to the time of the exile to Babylon, and perhaps also the time of chaos in Israel prior to the exile. This was a time of **discipline** for the people, since they refused to obey his commands and walk according to their covenant with Him.

1. Why will the future be different, from Zech 8:11? What is he hinting at? Check out Jer 31:31-34.

***Jeremiah 31:31–34***“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. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know YHWH,’ for they shall **all** know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares YHWH. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will **remember their sin no more.**”

The future will be different because YHWH says He will deal with his people differently. He seems to be hinting at the new covenant – a new way of dealing with the problem. The problem being that the people don’t live by God’s Torah. So solution is to write the Torah on their hearts (through the Holy Spirit) so that they will truly desire to live according to it. The two things that really make the new covenant “new” are the Messiah (that’s how YHWH can remember our sins no more) and the Holy Spirit (that’s how YHWH wrote the Torah on our hearts).

Note that the new covenant doesn’t seem to be fully implemented yet. It was clearly started, as Yeshua stated during his last Passover meal that he shared with his disciples, and seven weeks later it was fueled by the coming of the Holy Spirit. But we still have need of teaching one another, and “they shall all know me” doesn’t seem to have taken place yet.

1. God speaks of the “remnant” in verses 11 and 12. This is the Hebrew שְׁאֵרִית **she’erit** “remnant, remainder, those of successive generations as a figurative extension of what is left over from a whole”. What is this term “remnant” used to refer to? You may want to check out other verses that speak of the “remnant”, for example Micah 5:7-8, Isaiah 10:22-23, and Isaiah 11:16.

***Micah 5:7–8***Then the **remnant of Jacob** shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from YHWH, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man. And the **remnant of Jacob** shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver.

***Isaiah 10:22–23***For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, **only a remnant of them will return**. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. For Adonai YHWH **tseva’ot** will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth.

***Isaiah 11:16***And there will be a highway from Assyria for **the remnant that remains of his people**, as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt.

The remnant seems to refer to those who will saved; those who remain; those who are faithful, or who have repented and turned back to YHWH. Scripture often speaks of the remnant that will remain faithful. Out of the many (like the sand of the sea) only **a portion will remain faithful to the covenant.**

1. The concept of “first use” is an ancient Jewish way of beginning a word study. They look at the first time a particular word is used in the Torah. The thinking is that God sometimes gives key meaning to key words from the context where it is used in Scripture the very first time. The “first use” of שְׁאֵרִית **she’erit** “remnant” is in Genesis 45:7. What do you learn from this, recalling also that Joseph was in many ways symbolic of the Messiah?

***Genesis 45:5–8***And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you **to preserve for you a remnant on earth**, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God.

Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, sold for silver, sent as a slave to Egypt “to preserve a remnant”, to end up providing the only food for life for the very people that betrayed Him. Likewise the Messiah was betrayed by his brothers, sold for silver, lived as poor man on this earth to provide a path of salvation for the remnant that would believe. He was the bread of life, the only source of life for the very people that betrayed him.

This phrase in the Genesis passage really seems to be prophetic, speaking of the remnant on earth that would survive in the last days.

1. In Zech 8:12 the ESV translates “For there shall be a sowing of peace”. In Hebrew it literally says “For [there will be] **the seed of peace**”. Seed (Hebrew זֶרַע zera’ can mean seed, semen, offspring, descendants, etc. It is interesting that the very first mention (only a hint, actually) of the Messiah is in Gen 3:15. What word is used to hint at the Messiah in this Genesis passage?

***Genesis 3:15***I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your **offspring** and her **offspring**; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

It is the same word **zera’** “seed”. So the in first reference to the Messiah, He is called “a Seed”

1. Look at Gen 12:7 and Gen 22:18. Then look at Galatians 3:16 where Paul quotes from the Genesis. What word does Paul use to refer to the Messiah?

***Genesis 12:7***Then YHWH appeared to Abram and said, “**To your offspring I will give this land**.” So he built there an altar to YHWH, who had appeared to him.

***Genesis 22:18***and **in your offspring** shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

***Galatians 3:16***Now the promises were made to Abraham and to **his offspring**. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “**And to your offspring,” who is Christ.**

The word is Hebrew **zera’** “seed”. Paul says that Messiah is the Zera / Seed, just as the Messiah is first referred to in Gen 3:15.

1. The other interesting word in that phrase “For [there will be] **the seed of peace**” is the Hebrew שָׁלוֹם **shalom** “peace”. How is this word used in Isaiah 9:6-7?

***Isaiah 9:6–7***For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**. Of the increase of his government and of **peace** there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of YHWH **tseva’ot** will do this.

This is one of the names given to the Messiah: **Prince of Peace**. In Hebrew this is שַׂר־שָׁלֹֽום

1. In light of our word study about “seed” and “peace”, what do you think about the first part Zech 8:12 actually being a prophetic announcement? Maybe this phrase has a dual meaning – both a literal meaning and a prophetic meaning. If so, what would be the literal meaning, and what would be the prophetic announcement?

Literally – Instead of God sowing the seed of discipline through chaos and exile, He now is choosing to sow the seed of peace in dealing with this people. In other words just like He once “set every man against his neighbor”, He is now going to orchestrate peace and unity in the land.

Prophetically, YHWH will accomplish this orchestrating of peace through his sending his Son, “The Seed of Peace”, and the Prince of Peace to the earth, who will initiate the New Covenant.

1. Notice that in the Hebrew, the phrase is definite. In other words it is not “**a** seed of peace” but rather “**the** seed of peace”. Why, perhaps, is the “**the**” significant?

It is probably definite with the “the” because this refers to the Messiah. It is not just “**a**” seed of peace but rather “**the**” Seed of Peace.

1. Look at Zech 8:12-14 and list all the qualities of life that will be evident in those days of “**the seed of peace**”.

* vine will bear fruit
* earth will bear produce
* rain will fall (dew from heaven)
* all things will belong to the remnant of Israel
* YHWH will “save” them
* they will be a blessing

1. According to Scripture we know that when the Messiah came, he initiated the “new covenant”. We also know from Scripture that not all aspects of the new covenant will be completed until the Messiah returns again, prior to the end times. With this in mind, take a look at Ezekiel 34:23-31 and Ezekiel 37:24-28. What is another name for the new covenant in these passages? How would you describe life for those that are a part of this covenant? What similarities do you see to the Zechariah passage we are studying?

***Ezekiel 34:23–31***And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, YHWH, will be their God, and **my servant David shall be prince** among them. I am YHWH; I have spoken. I will make with them a **covenant of peace** and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may **dwell securely i**n the wilderness and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the **showers in their season;** they shall be showers of blessing. And the **trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase,** and they shall be **secure in their land.** And they shall know that I am YHWH, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them. They shall **dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid**. And I will provide for them renowned plantations so that they shall **no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations.** And they shall know that I am YHWH their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares Adonai YHWH. And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares Adonai YHWH.

***Ezekiel 37:24–28***“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.”

The Messiah (referred to as David, but recall that the literal King David had already died centuries earlier) will be **Prince** forever with those who are a part of the **covenant of peace.** This is fitting with his title **Prince of Peace** in Isaiah.

Just like in Zechariah, YHWH will dwell in their midst forever, and there will be peace and prosperity in the land.

1. What does it mean that they “have been a byword of cursing among the nations?” Consider also Jer 24:9, Jer 42:18-19, Jer 44:11-14. Also notice the use of the word “remnant” in the latter two passages.

[Note that the word for curse here is Hebrew קְלָלָה **kelalah** “curse, proclamation of words to lessen or in some way diminish someone”. Hebrew has a stronger word for curse (אָרַר **‘arar**) that means to pronounce of oath of disaster against someone, but that is not the word used here. **Kelalah** is often used as the exact opposite of blessing. Blessing is the Hebrew בְּרָכָה **berachah** “blessing, proclamation or pronouncement of prosperity or increase upon someone.” See for example, Gen 27:12, Deut 11:26, Deut 23:5, Deut 30:1, Deut 30:19, Josh 8:34, Neh 13:2 where blessing (**berachah)** and curse (**kelalah)** are in used in direct contrast with one another.]

***Jeremiah 24:9***I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be **a reproach, a byword, a taunt, and a curse** in all the places where I shall drive them.

***Jeremiah 42:18–19***For thus says YHWH **tseva’ot** , the God of Israel: As my anger and my wrath were poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so my wrath will be poured out on you when you go to Egypt. You shall become an **execration, a horror, a curse, and a taunt**. You shall see this place no more. YHWH has said to you, O **remnant of Judah**, ‘Do not go to Egypt.’ Know for a certainty that I have warned you this day.

***Jeremiah 44:11–14***Therefore thus says YHWH **tseva’ot**, the God of Israel: Behold, I will set my face against you for harm, to cut off all Judah. I will take the **remnant of Judah** who have set their faces to come to the land of Egypt to live, and they shall all be consumed. In the land of Egypt they shall fall; by the sword and by famine they shall be consumed. From the least to the greatest, they shall die by the sword and by famine, and **they shall become an oath, a horror, a curse, and a taunt**. I will punish those who dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, so that none of **the remnant of Judah** who have come to live in the land of Egypt shall escape or survive or return to the land of Judah, to which they desire to return to dwell there. For they shall not return, except some fugitives.”

The words “curse” and “taunt” are often used together. We get the sense from these passages (and others), that the people of Israel will be in such dire straights that the nations will make fun of them, taunt them, and even use them as a stereotype of a curses people. Perhaps they would say to someone, “you are as cursed as an Israelite”, much like people today sometimes have derogatory sayings about certain races or ethnic groups.

1. In Zech 8:13, the phrase “so will I save you” has the Hebrew word יָשַׁע **yasha’** “to save, rescue, deliver”. This is the root word from which comes **yeshua** “salvation” as well as the name of the Messiah. Could there be a double meaning hinted at here (literal as well as prophetic)? If so, what would those meanings be?

Literally, YHWH is going to save (rescue, deliver) his people. But how will he do it? Through the Messiah (named “Salvation”) and new covenant. The Messiah and the new covenant have been referred to or at least hinted at throughout this passage. So in this verse we have yet another place where we see this possibly happening.

1. Look at the phrase “you shall be a blessing” (**berachah**) in Zech 8:13. See if you can find the “first use” of this key word in Scripture. What is the connection with this prophetic word from Zechariah and that “first use” of the term? How will that blessing come about?

The “first use” of **berachah** is Gen 12:2. The verb “to bless” is used several times prior to Genesis 12, but never the noun “blessing”.

***Genesis 12:2–3***And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that **you will be a blessing**. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

In this prophetic passage of Zech 8, which is continually hinting at the latter days, the coming of the Messiah, and the new covenant, we see prophesied the ultimate fulfillment of the very first promise made to Abraham several thousand years ago. Abraham had no idea how this promise would be fulfilled. Neither did Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, or Moses. Not until the Messiahs resurrection did some (like Paul) begin to understand. With hindsight we can now look back at prophetic words such as these in Zechariah and understand that through the Messiah, son of David, son of Abraham, the Gentiles through faith in the Messiah, would be able to be “grafted in” to the new covenant.

1. Compare the last phrase of Zech 8:13 with the first phrase of Zech 8:9. How does YHWH both start and end his words to the people? How would the content of the message encourage the people to respond in this way?

“Let your hands be strong”. This both starts and ends the message. The message itself assures the people that there is a wonderful ending ahead if they are diligent to remain a part of the remnant. There will be a new covenant ushering in peace and prosperity, and YHWH will dwell in their midst forever. In other words, there are great blessings ahead for you, if you don’t give up. So work hard and finish the task before you!

1. How would you summarize the message of this section?

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, as was promised to your father Abraham.

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