

ZECHARIAH

Chapter 8

The Lord Promises to Bless Jerusalem

Again 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 City of Truth, 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 with cane in hand because of his 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.” ⁹ This is what the LORD Almighty says: “You who now hear these words spoken by the prophets who were there when the foundation was laid for the house of the LORD Almighty, let your hands be strong so that the temple may be built. ¹⁰ Before that time there were no wages for man or beast. No one could go about his business safely because of his enemy, for I had turned every man against his neighbor. 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 As you have been an object of cursing among the nations, O Judah and Israel, so will I save you, and you will be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong.” ¹⁴ This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Just as I had determined to bring disaster upon you and showed no pity when your fathers 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 your neighbor, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this,” declares the LORD. ¹⁸ Again the word of the LORD Almighty came to me. ¹⁹ This is what the LORD Almighty says: “The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months will become joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals for Judah. Therefore love truth and peace.” ²⁰ This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, ²¹ and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, ‘Let us go at once to entreat the LORD and seek the LORD Almighty. I myself am going.’ ²² And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him.” ²³ This is what the LORD Almighty says: “In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.’”

8:1–23 Ten promises of blessing, each beginning with “This is what the LORD (Almighty) says” (vv. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 14, 18, 20, 23). (CSB)

8:1 The Lord now speaks words of promise to encourage His people. (TLSB)

8:2 *Thus says the LORD.* This phrase, introducing oracles of the Lord, is repeated 10 times in ch 8. (TLSB)

jealous. This is not like human jealousy, which is a negative emotion and a destructive force, but rather an intense and absolute commitment. (TLSB)

His zeal is that of a husband for the wife of his youth. This is said in a most vehement affection directed toward His congregation and a corresponding anger against her oppressors. (Kretzmann)

great wrath. Directed at the enemies of His people (1:15), whereas for a time He had been angry with His own people (7:12). (TLSB)

8:3 *dwell.* God will once more be occupying the dwelling-place of His honor in the midst of His people, which He had forsaken because of the wickedness of the idolatrous nation. (Kretzmann)

The Hebrew word is shakan. The root for the word “tabernacle.” God had dwelt with His people in the tabernacle and temple. With the rebuilding of the temple, His presence was again assured. (TLSB)

the City of Truth. Cf. v. 16. This is where the Lord’s truth, the truth of His eternal Word, would once more be found. (Kretzmann)

ESV has “faithful city.” This was a name Jerusalem lost (Is. 1:21) and would now be restored. God’s faithfulness would be reflected in the transformation of His people. (TLSB)

the Holy Mountain. Cf. 14:20–21. (CSB)

This is where His Temple arose and it was the center of the true worship on the earth. (Kretzmann)

8:4–5 The word “streets” occurs 3 times in these verses. The Hebrew for it refers to “open places,” such as a city park rather than a modern street. (TLSB)

8:4 OLD MEN AND OLD WOMEN – This is a tranquil scene of elderly people sitting in city plazas, where soldiers would camp in times of war, and recalls the promise of the Fourth Commandment (Ex. 20:12). Sociologists estimate that men typically lived less than 40 years, and women even fewer due to the dangers of childbearing. Studies of

the king's chronologies suggest a typical life expectancy of c. 46 years for rulers. (TLSB)

8:5 This is an imagery of children, who with the elderly (v.4) are among the most vulnerable people in society, happily playing. These words were particularly encouraging to exile who had returned, because the city was still sparsely populated (7:7). (TLSB)

8:6 *will it seem marvelous to me?* See Ge 18:14 and **note**; Jer 32:17, 27. (CSB)

Rhetorical question. What might seem humanly impossible was not difficult for the Lord of hosts to accomplish. (TLSB)

In spite of the miraculous character of the restoration, if looked at from the standpoint of men, it would yet certainly take place, for it was not too hard for Jehovah, His promise affecting both the greatness and the certainty of the coming salvation. (Kretzmann)

remnant. Small band of survivors who had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon.

8:7 *save my people.* Deliver them from exile, bondage and dispersion (cf. Isa 11:11–12; 43:5–7; Jer 30:7–11; 31:7–8). (CSB)

This clear statement of the Gospel, repeated in v. 13, is key to understanding all of Scripture. God is the one who saves His people (Ex 14:30; Ps. 106:8, 10; Acts 16:3). The very name Jesus means “the Lord saves” (cf. Mt. 1:21). (TLSB)

from the countries of the east and west. Lit. “from the land of the sunrise and from the land of the going in of the sun,” i.e., from everywhere—wherever the people are (cf. Ps 50:1; 113:3; Mal 1:11). (CSB)

People will come from all quarters of the earth to share in the blessings of salvation (Is 2:2–3; Mal 1:11). God will gather His people no matter how far and wide they may be scattered. (TLSB)

8:8 *dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.* Just as God had a dwelling place among His people (v 3), so they will dwell in Jerusalem, an image of the true Church of God throughout the world (Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22–23). (TLSB)

they will be my people, and I will be ... their God. Covenant terminology, pertaining to intimate fellowship in a covenant relationship (see Ex 6:7; 29:45–46; Lev 11:45; 22:33; 25:38; 26:45; Nu 15:41; Dt 29:13; Jer 24:7; 31:33; 32:38; Eze 34:30–31; 36:28; 37:27; Hos 1:9–10; 2:23; 2Co 6:16; Heb 8:10; Rev 21:3). (CSB)

What the Lord had promised in Dt 30:1–6 finds its fulfillment here. He once again affirms the close bond that exists between Him and His people (Jer 30:22; Eze 36:28 Hos 2:23). (TLSB)

faithful and righteous. Judah's restoration to covenant favor and blessing rests on the faithfulness (dependability) and righteousness of God. (CSB)

Two familiar words describing the relationship between covenant partners. (TLSB)

This is truly the glory of the Christian era, when, as St. John writes, we saw His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Cf. John 1, 14. (Kretzmann)

8:9 *prophets.* Including Haggai (1:1) and Zechariah (1:1; cf. Ezr 5:1–2). (CSB)

Prophets like Haggai and Zechariah had been speaking such words of encouragement since the foundation for the restored temple had been laid. (TLSB)

hands be strong. See v. 13. The Hebrew for this expression is translated “be encouraged” in Jdg 7:11. (CSB)

In this sixth oracle, the Lord repeats words of encouragement originally addressed to Zerubbabel and Joshua and found again in v 13. (TLSB)

TEMPLE MAY BE BUILT – These prophets had begun their activity at the time when the foundation of the second Temple had already been built, and the good effects of their preaching were now apparent in the nation. (Kretzmann)

8:10 *Before that time.* Before the temple foundation was laid (see v. 9). (CSB)

no wages. See Hag 1:6–11; 2:15–19. (CSB)

Conditions had improved compared to the early days of the exiles' return. Those were days of scarcity for people and animals (cf. Hg 1:10-11) (TLSB)

enemy. For example, the Samaritans (Ezr 4:1–5). (CSB)

There was so much envy and hostility among the people themselves, and on account of jealousy stirred up by the Samaritans, that the ordinary occupations of life were continually being interfered with. (Kretzmann)

The returning Judeans experienced intense opposition from their Gentile neighbors. (TLSB)

man against his neighbor. Even among the exiles there was disunity and strife, resulting in evil and discouragement. (TLSB)

8:11 *But now.* The reasons for discouragement have passed; God will now provide the grounds for encouragement. (CSB)

God promised a new day for those exiles who had returned. (TLSB)

He was now ready once more to gladden them with the rich blessings of His goodness and mercy. (Kretzmann)

8:12 Contrast with Hag 1:10–11. In Hag 2:19 God had predicted just such a reversal as is depicted here. Fertility and bounty are part of the covenant blessings for obedience promised in Lev 26:3–10; Dt 28:11–12; cf. Eze 34:25–27. (CSB)

The glorious future is described in agricultural terms. God’s new day will produce a fruitful harvest of peace (vv 16, 19; Lk 2:14). (TLSB)

8:13 *object of cursing among the nations.* Part of the covenant curses for disobedience threatened in Dt 28:15–68 (see Dt 28:37); cf. Jer 24:9; 25:18. (CSB)

God’s people had been an object of scorn in the eyes of heathen nations. (TLSB)

Judah and Israel. The whole nation will experience this deliverance and blessing (cf. Jer 31:1–31; Eze 37:15–28). (CSB)

The promised reunion of the previously separated Southern and Northern Kingdoms (Ezk 37:15–22) is an image of the Church’s unity (Gal 6:16; Eph 4:4–6). (TLSB)

blessing. See vv. 20–23; cf. Ge 12:2. (CSB)

No longer will God’s people be a “byword of cursing,” but He will bless them and make them a blessing to the world (Gal 3:14). (TLSB)

8:14–17 Verses 14–15 specify God’s part in the people’s restoration to favor and blessing; vv. 16–17 delineate their part. (CSB)

8:14-15 DETERMINED – ESV has “purposed.” This Hebrew term is usually used in a negative manner. However, as God determined to bring disaster on Israel, so now God will supplant disaster with blessing and bring good to Jerusalem and the house of Judah. (TLSB)

8:14 BRING DISASTER – He could not, in point of fact, without denying His own holiness, fail to execute His threat of punishment. (Kretzmann)

In the seventh oracle, God announces a reversal of His previous actions (7:14). The Babylonian exile was God’s purposeful punishment for a long history of disobedience. (TLSB)

your fathers angered me. (CSB)

not relent. Because Judah required severe discipline, God stayed the course. (TLSB)

8:15 *do good.* See vv. 12–13. (CSB)

Now that the covenant relation was once more established, God now brings the content of every true Gospel-message. Since God is gracious for the sake of the Messiah, therefore men have no reason to fear as long as they put their trust in Him alone. (Kretzmann)

fear not. Cf v 13. The promise will not fail. (TLSB)

8:16–17 See 7:9–10. Such moral and ethical behavior sums up the character of those who are in covenant relationship with the Lord. (CSB)

8:16 THINGS THAT YOU ARE TO DO – The Lord had promised good to His people and now tells them what they should do. Two positive obligations are followed by two negatives, similar to those in 7:9-10. These virtues are basic for a well-functioning society. (TLSB)

SPEAK THE TRUTH – God puts a high priority on this obligation, one that believers are to love (v 19; Pr 12:22; Eph 4:15). The new Jerusalem is called “the faithful city” (v 3), which might be translated “the city of truth.” (TLSB)

courts. Lit. “gates” (CSB)

Civil courts convened at the gate of the city. Truthfulness in judicial proceedings was another of God’s particular concerns (cf Mi 6:8). (TLSB)

make for peace. Fair decisions resulted in peaceful living (v 12). (TLSB)

8:17 *swear falsely.* Perjure oneself. (CSB)

Bearing false witness against a neighbor seems to have been a serious problem and was specifically forbidden in the Eighth Commandment (Dt 5:20; 19:16-19). (TLSB)

I hate all this. Pr 6:16–19 lists seven things the Lord hates, three of which relate directly to vv. 16–17 here: “a lying tongue,” “a heart that devises wicked schemes” and “a false witness who pours out lies.” (CSB)

The sins mentioned all make the list of the seven “abominations” in Pr 6:16–19. (TLSB)

It is a most emphatic declaration, spoken with great solemnity, and it holds true for all time. God hates and despises wickedness in every form, and He wants those who are His children to wage continual warfare against every transgression of His holy Law. (Kretzmann)

8:1–17 In a series of seven oracles, the Lord of hosts contrasts His future blessings with the judgment His people had suffered in former days. God was good to Israel, and He has been good

to us. We do not deserve His goodness, for there is no merit or worthiness in us. Yet His grace has allowed us to see in Christ the spiritual fulfillment of many of His ancient promises. As people who trust in His mercy, we look forward to a glorious future and seek to serve Him in all we say and do. • Lord, how very good You have been to Your people and to me. Give me a thankful heart, and move me to glorify You in word and deed. Amen. (TLSB)

8:18 WORD OF THE LORD – This signals the last of the five sections of chs 7-8, all with similar introductions (7:1, 4,8; 8:1, 18). Finally the answer is given to the question asked by the delegates from Bethel regarding fasting observances (7:3). Vv 19-23 record the final 3 of the 10 oracles spoken by the Lord of hosts. (TLSB)

8:19 See 7:2–6. (CSB)

fourth. The fast that lamented the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Ki 25:3–4; Jer 39:2; 52:6–7). (CSB)

The Judeans evidently observed four fasts connected with the fall of Jerusalem. The fourth-month fast commemorated the breaching of Jerusalem’s walls (2 Ki 25:8-10). (TLSB)

fifth. Commemorated the burning of the temple and the other important buildings (2Ki 25:8–10; Jer 52:12–14). (CSB)

Lamented the burning of the temple and other important buildings (2Ki 25:8–10). (TLSB)

seventh. Marked the anniversary of Gedaliah’s assassination (2Ki 25:22–25; Jer 41:1–3). (CSB)

Marked the anniversary of the assassination of Gedaliah, provisional governor of the occupied territory (2Ki 25:22–25). (TLSB)

tenth. Mourned the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Jerusalem (2Ki 25:1; Jer 39:1; 52:4; Eze 24:1–2). (CSB)

Mourned the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (2Ki 25:1). (TLSB)

happy festivals. Cf. Isa 65:18–19; Jer 31:10–14. (CSB)

The deep sorrow associated with the memories of the great calamities surrounding Jerusalem’s fall will be supplanted by joyful celebrations. The Hebrew words call to mind the joy of a wedding celebration (Jer 33:11), the gladness of social festivities (Est 9:17-18; Is 65:18-19), and cheerful feasts. The ultimate fulfillment of this promise will be the heavenly banquet of salvation (Is 25:6-9; Rev 19:6-10). (TLSB)

love truth and peace. Proclamation that the fasts will change to feasts ends with the encouragement to love what the Lord loves: truth and peace. (TLSB)

8:20–23 For similar predictions about Gentiles seeking the Lord see 2:11 and **note**; Isa 2:2–4; Mic 4:1–5. (CSB)

8:20 This is not just an individual here and there, but large groups of peoples, cities, and nations will come (Is 2:1-4. This points to the NT era, when God brings Jews and Gentiles from all nations together into one Body, His Church (Eph 2:11-13; Rv 7:9). (TLSB)

8:21 OF ONE CITY – Converts from one city will go to neighboring cities and invite others to join them as they seek God (cf Jn 1:38-51). (TLSB)

I myself am going. Converts will encourage one another by their own examples, a most effective form of evangelism. (TLSB)

8:22 *powerful.* Or “numerous” Anticipates a fulfillment of the promise of Gentile blessing in the Abrahamic covenant (Ge 12:3; Gal 3:8, 26–29; see also Isa 55:5; 56:6–7; cf. Mk 11:17). (CSB)

That great multitudes and even powerful nations should seek the Lord is truly amazing (Mt 8:11; Rv 11:15). The struggling group of returning exiles who had not yet completely restored the temple would become a great movement with the new Jerusalem as its focal point (Rv. 21:2) (TLSB)

8:23 *Thus says the LORD of hosts.* Last of the 10 oracles in this chapter. (TLSB)

IN THOSE DAYS – The prophets often use this expression when referring to the NT era (cf Zep 3:9, 16; Hg 2:23; Zec 13:1). (TLSB)

ten. One way of indicating a large or complete number in Hebrew. (CSB)

Symbolic number to emphasize completeness, a large number of Gentiles. (TLSB)

nations of every tongue. A variety of languages were spoken on Pentecost (Ac 2:1–13). (TLSB)

take hold of the robe. Gentile nations will come to the Light (Lk 2:32), to Jesus, born in Judah (Mt 2:1–11). (TLSB)

Jew. The word, used of the people of the kingdom of Judah after the exile, occurs first in Jer 32:12. (CSB)

we have heard that God is with you. True godliness attracts others to the Lord (see Ge 26:28; 30:27). (CSB)

Hbr *yehudi*, “person of Judah.” The tribe of Judah and all Israel had a favored status in the history of salvation (Rm 9:4–5). It is from their history that salvation has come to all people through the preaching of the Gospel. Modern Judaism began to emerge during the time between the OT and the NT, becoming firmly established after the Roman destruction of Herod’s temple (AD 70). Luther: “It is as if He were saying: ‘The Gospel will be preached throughout the earth. It will bear such great fruit that one apostle . . . will with his preaching convert many thousands of people to righteousness. They will follow spontaneously, not because the Law compels them but because the Holy Spirit leads them’ ” (AE 20:87–88) (TLSB)

Not God’s personal name (Hebrew Yahweh, “Lord,” which occurs c 125 times in Zec); Gentiles converts use the general Hebrew term ‘*elohim* (“God”) by itself only here and in 9:7. (Zechariah sometimes puts the two terms together; e.g., 6:15.) The Gentiles are convinced that the true God is the One worshiped by the Judeans. (TLSB)

8:18–23 God tells the people of Bethel that their fasts will become joyful worship. He promises a great movement of people from the Gentile world who will seek the Lord and entreat His favor. People of all nations will become one in the Holy Christian Church. Their worship will not be empty ritual but a feast of joy and gladness, remembering God’s gracious activity throughout human history. God continues to come to us in Word and Sacrament with His message of repentance and forgiveness, a message for us to proclaim to all nations (Lk 24:47). • Lord of the Church, give me joy in worship and the desire to invite others to come with me. Amen. (TLSB)