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, 18** See note on 6:9. (CSB)

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

**8:2** *jealous.* See 1:14; see also note on Ex 20:5. (CSB)

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)

**8:3** *I will return.* See 1:3 and note; 1:16. (CSB)

 *dwell.* See note on 2:10. (CSB)

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; see Isa 1:26 and note. (CSB)

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** See Isa 11:6–9 and note; 65:20–25. (CSB)

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, 11–12** *remnant.* See notes on Isa 1:9; 10:20–22. (CSB)

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

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)

**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)

**8:8** *they will be my people, and I will be … their God.* Covenant terminology, pertaining to intimate fellowship in a covenant relationship (see 13:9; Ge 17:7 and note; Ex 6:7; 29:45–46; Lev 11:45; 22:33; 25:38; 26:12 and note; 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)

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

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)

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

 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)

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

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)

 *hands be strong.* See note on v. 9. (CSB)

**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)

 *your fathers angered me.* See note on 1:2. (CSB)

**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)

**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” (see Ge 19:1 and note; 2Sa 18:24). (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)

**8:17** *swear falsely.* Perjure oneself (see note on 5:3). (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)

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)

**8:18** 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)

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

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

 *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)

**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)

**8:22** *powerful.* Or “numerous” (as in Ex 1:9; NIV text note on Isa 53:12); 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 Jerusaelm as its focal point (Rv. 21:2) (TLSB)

**8:23** 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 (see Ge 31:7 and note; Lev 26:26; Nu 14:22; 1Sa 1:8; Ne 4:12). (CSB)

 *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; see also notes on Ge 39:2–6; 1Co 14:24). (CSB)

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)