

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH
ENCOURAGEMENT FOR GOD'S PEOPLE
ZECHARIAH 1:1-6

Introduction

God led His people out of their 70-year Babylonian captivity and brought them back to Jerusalem, fulfilling the promise He made through Jeremiah the prophet (*Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10-14*).

The Lord was giving the Jews a completely new perspective: The possibility of rebuilding Jerusalem, particularly the Temple, and the wall around Jerusalem. They would once again be able to live, sacrifice and serve God in their city!

The Lord sent Zechariah the prophet to give those returning home a new hope for the future. He showed them new possibilities, and above all, the glorious future that would be theirs under the Messiah's reign.

Israel would receive a new vision and would recognize God's plan for its future. God wanted to encourage the Israelites through Zechariah to take advantage of the opportunity and to dedicate themselves wholly to Him!

The new work was not to be delayed. Israel was to give the Lord first priority, and this is the theme of Zechariah's first six verses!

Verse 3 is key!

Complete dedication is always a condition for the success of a new task. The Old Testament book of Haggai explains how serious a delay can be! (*See Haggai 1:9*)

Likewise, the Lord continually presents us with new possibilities because He wants to lead us to His best for us! He wants to ignite hope in us! His work is a great work! And a great work demands great faithfulness, dedication and zeal!

I want us to see before us that the LORD encouraged His people to rededicate themselves to Him and His will for them:

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I. WE SEE THE ENCOURAGEMENT GIVEN THROUGH THREE NAMES. (Zechariah 1:1)

God presented King Darius of the Persians along with three Hebrew names.

Darius ruled over the known world, which included Israel, at that time. Although the Jews were granted permission to return to their homeland, they were still subject to Darius' authority.

The time of the Gentiles began with Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar's leadership when he destroyed Jerusalem and led Judah into captivity (*2 Chronicles 36:10-21*).

The time of the Gentiles continued over the Persian, Greek and Roman Empires, and will last until the Lord returns to judge the nations and begin His reign in Israel!

The fact that a Gentile king ruled continually was a reminder to the Jews that, despite their return to their land, they remained under the rule of the nations.

The Bible also says that while believers are still in the world, we are no longer of this world! (*John 17:15-16*)

But it seems as though God wanted to use Zechariah's first sentence to remind His people that this would not always be the case; thus, their hope was grounded in God's promises. In the same way, our living hope is based not on the things of this earth, but on the future.

Three names are revealed in Zechariah 1:1. Let's take a look at what each of these names mean:

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- A. ***Zechariah = Jehovah Remembers: "The Lord remembers"***
The name Zechariah draws our attention to the fact that the Lord will never forget the promises He made to the patriarchs:

*Isaiah 49:15-16—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of my womb? **yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.** Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me"*

God's promises are infallible. He never regrets any of them! Even if the Gentiles rule Israel, God never will forget His promises. The evidence lies in the fact that He led the Israelites out of their captivity and brought them back to their homeland.

But why does the Lord "remember" ? He remembers so that He can bless them! That is found in the second name!

- B. ***Berechiah = Blessed by Jehovah: "The Lord will bless"***
The name Berechiah, "*the Lord will bless,*" reminds us of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:2 that He would, "*...make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.*"

Ultimately, the Lord will lead His people into the great blessings of the Messianic reign, as revealed in the book of ***Zechariah 8:13. (Cf. Isaiah 61:9)***
So, When will this be fulfilled?

- C. ***Iddo = "Timely; born at an appointed time"***
The name Iddo, or "*born at the appointed time,*" emphasizes that the time will come — God alone knows when — and it will not tarry.

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Habakkuk 2:3—"For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

God will fulfill His promise to redeem His people, bless them and make them into a blessing. The Jews will be saved at God's appointed time!

What does Israel's future blessing consist of? How does God remember His people? He recognizes them through His Son, Jesus Christ, which is why these three names prophetically point to Jesus.

- ***Zechariah: The Lord Remembers (Luke 1:54-55).***
- ***Berechiah: The Lord Will Bless (Acts 3:25-26).***
- ***Iddo: Born At An Appointed Time (Galatians 4:4-5)***

Salvation was accomplished at Christ's First Advent (or Coming) through His voluntary death on the Cross and His glorious Resurrection!

Jesus Christ is proof that God always remembers His people, that He will bless them and that He will save them! Israel's future is guaranteed because of Christ!

When He returns, they will see Him whom they pierced (**chapter 12:10**), the time of the nations will come to an end, and He will begin His world-wide reign from Jerusalem! (**Zechariah 14:9**)

These words also serve as a great encouragement for believers in that we, too, shall never be forgotten by God!

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Psalm 16:8—"I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved"

Hebrews 13:5-6—"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

II. WE SEE THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF A PROMISE FROM GOD! (Zechariah 1:2-3)

The Lord was very displeased with His disobedient people in the past. And, because of that, they were led into captivity. (2 Kings 21:14-15)

But things were about to change. The Lord wanted to forget His anger and turn back to them. His grace would again be upon Israel.

God's demand to turn to Him was not based upon a threat of judgment, but on the promise that He would turn to them. But, one condition had to be fulfilled: The Jews had to turn to Him again with their whole hearts!

Haggai admonished the people to begin rebuilding the Temple, a task that had become neglected. (Haggai 1:12-15) The Israelites listened to the Lord's voice and were encouraged to proceed with the building of the Temple. The Lord promised them: *"I am with you, saith the LORD."* (Haggai 1:13)

Two months into the rebuilding, they were admonished to give Him their hearts. Why? The Lord could have said, "How wonderful it is to see how busy you are working on My house!" Instead, He instructed them to turn to Him!

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Consider this: You can serve the Lord without following Him, but you cannot follow Him without serving Him!

Apparently, the Israelites were serving the Lord without following Him. They were busy working on the Temple, but the Lord wanted more. He wanted their hearts!

They weren't instructed to simply work on the Temple in an attempt to outwardly fulfill the Law; the Lord wanted them to turn back to Him as well: *"Turn ye unto me!"*

God expressed this call to turn around through Hosea the prophet with these words: *"For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."* (Hosea 6:6)

Only when Israel gave the Lord first priority would the blessings flow in full measure.

For believers, this means that our personal, earnest dedication to Jesus Christ is more important than everything we do for Him or for His Name's sake.

Jesus doesn't just want our service; He wants our hearts! Of course, He wants to use us as His co-workers, but what He really desires is our love! He wants to have deep fellowship with His children!

The Lord blesses our hard work for Him, and we experience that He is with us in it; but we should also experience Him much more deeply! But we can only do this if we have turned wholeheartedly to Him, living our lives for Him!

The New Testament teaches this very clearly:

1. The Lord acknowledged and praised the laboring and patient Ephesians, but He was really wanting to be their first love, which, according to Revelation 2:1-7, was lacking.

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2. When the Lord chose His twelve apostles for service, He was concerned with something much more important: Mark 3:14–
"And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach."

Conclusion

Living for God, having fellowship with Jesus, and serving Him out of this fellowship is what counts! This is the essence of Christianity! Blessings for our lives and deeds are only found in our complete devotion to God!