

Zechariah 8:18-23

Like all of Scripture, the book of Zechariah points to Jesus Christ, and, in particular, to the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

As the prophet concludes the Lord's reply to the delegation from Bethel, he speaks of revival in the spiritual life of God's people, so that the church will fulfill its ultimate mission: bringing the multitudes of the nations to God to worship and be saved.

Summary

In Zechariah 8:18-23, the prophet foresees a glorious salvation, one that is not only for the Jews, but also for the whole world.

1. Answered Question vv. 18-19

In Zechariah 7:3, the delegation from Bethel asked about continuing their fasts.

The prophet replies with a grand panorama of salvation (**Zech 8:18-19**).

He foretold a great hope for God's people and also "forth-told" divine expectations for the covenant community, holding up God's commands for their present behavior. This proclamation is an advance promise of the gospel, that God will cause fasts to give way to feasts. Zechariah speaks of a time, yet to come, which the New Testament identifies as the coming of Christ.

Jesus brings in the new covenant situation, one of feasting and not fasting, of comfort for these who mourn, and of gladness for those who were sad.

There is still mourning in the new covenant era, but mourning's answer has come.

Every true Christian knows what it means to go from the fast of conviction of sin to the feast of salvation through faith in Christ.

2. Resurrection Rejoicing vs.19

This feast of salvation is what Christ's resurrection proclaims.

Jesus said that none can fast while he is with them, but then he added this: "The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day" (**Mark 2:20**). Easter proclaims that our greatest sorrows have been transformed into joy through the resurrection of Christ.

It is not that we have no trials and tears in the pilgrim life of the believer, but they are transformed by the light of Christ's open tomb. (**1 Cor 15:54-55**).

Because Christ died for us, but more, because he was raised for us for newness of life, fasts are made into feasts, and our mourning receives its answer of joy.

Zechariah says, it is not that the fasts will be simply removed, but they "shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts" (**Zech. 8: 19**).

Instead of lamenting those days in the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months, the Jews will look back on them with gratitude.

This is what we find in our own Christian experience.

This does not mean there is no place for fasting in the Christian life.

As believers, we experience times of grief, remorse, anxiety, or need, for which fasting will still be a healthy approach for our worship of God but even our fasting is performed with the certainty that "joy and gladness and cheerful feasts" (**Zech. 8:19**) have been prepared for us by God.

True spiritual joy also stokes the fires of a new zeal to live for God.

"Therefore," says the prophet, "love truth and peace" (**Zech. 8: 19**).

3. Coming Nations vv. 20-23

Zechariah first foretells the transformation of religion in the new covenant to come as God's response to the question about fasting but then also goes on to forth-tell of the accomplishment of God's saving purpose in the world through the church.

First, there is a stirring prophecy of Christianity's effect on the world (**Zech 8:20-22**).

Secondly, these verses inform us that the mission of the church is to lead other people to God.

Thirdly, these verses present a model for the church's evangelistic outreach. (**Zech 8:21; 23**).

What do people need to see in our churches and in our lives if we are to have the kind of magnetic pull that will make them want to come?

It is not that we are fun-loving or impressive by worldly standards.

Rather, they need to see the presence and power of God.

In Zechariah's prophecy we see that evangelism is personal; it consists of the gospel message that must be spoken and heard; and we must bear witness to that message in our own lives.

4. One True Israelite

Zechariah speaks of people from all nations and tongues taking hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe. This depicts one person coming to God by the ministry and the credentials of another. This is an apt picture of faith in Jesus Christ.

God has provided one man to mediate between himself and sinful mankind (**1 Tim. 2:5-6**).

He is the One in whom Israel finds its fulfillment Jesus is not just a Jew but the Jew, the one true Israelite, through whom all may come to seek and find the Lord

What does it mean to trust in Jesus, but to lay hold of his coat, that is his righteousness, rejecting our own as filthy rags, and to receive his achievement in the place of our failure, finding shelter in his status as beloved son.

Happy indeed are all who hear and see and go with Jesus to dwell in the presence of God; for their fasts will be turned into feasts and they will praise Him with great rejoicing forever.