

BOOK OF ZECHARIAH
PRESENT ENCOURAGEMENT FROM GOD-PART 1
ZECHARIAH 8:9-17

Introduction

The **PROPHECY** we looked at in *Zechariah 8:1-8* will only find its **FULFILLMENT** in the establishment of **CHRIST'S MILLENNIAL REIGN** on the earth.

Now we know that their hearts could be encouraged by the **MESSAGE OF THAT TIME TO COME** just as ours are! But just like us, the **LORD'S** people needed some **ENCOURAGEMENT** to help them in the days they were living! Here we see that the **LORD** did have a **WORD** to help the **PEOPLE OF ZECHARIAH'S** generation!

We see here that the **LORD** gives them **HIS ASSURANCE** that **HE WILL** indeed **RESPOND TO THE REPENTANCE OF THEIR SIN** and **THEIR RENEWED OBEDIENCE TO HIM AND HIS WORD** and that **HE HAS PURPOSED A NEW TIME OF BLESSING FOR THEM!**

I. WE SEE THAT THE LORD SPOKE OF BOTH THE PRESENT AND THE PAST. (Vs. 9-10)

The **WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT** in *verse 9* are for those who had been **LISTENING** to the **PREACHING** of the **PROPHETS** over the long haul (for many years).

This message was to those who *"in these days"* [i.e. Those in the present and recent past] had been those **HEARING**, and **TAKING HOLD** of the **WORD OF THE LORD GOD**, *"the words of the prophets."*

The construction of the sentence here denotes a **CONTINUOUS HEARING!** Those who had been **CONTINUOUSLY LISTENING** to the **LORD** are the ones who could personally **CLAIM** these **PROMISES!**

These were the ones who had both **HEARD** and **RESPONDED** to the **LORD'S WORDS!**

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These were not just any words but these were the **LORD'S WORDS** directed to *"ye that hear."* Any that want receive **SPECIAL BLESSINGS** from the **LORD** must give audience to **HIM** over the course of time!

These words were from the *"mouth of the prophets."* [*"Mouth"* is singular indicating that the **PROPHETS** spoke with one accord!] Whoever else may be included, we know that **HAGGAI** and **ZECHARIAH** were certainly intended (*Ezra 5:1-2*).

About twenty years prior to this time the physical foundation of the **TEMPLE** had been laid and the altar rebuilt. But for the next seventeen years no more progress was made because the people **gave in to hindrances and difficulties** and **turned to attempting to prosper themselves.**

But the **PROPHETS PREACHED** and the administrators and many of the people **REPENTED** and **RETURNED TO THE LORD**, and now the good effects of their **OBEDIENCE** to the **WORD OF THE LORD** were to be seen in the present progress toward the completion of the **TEMPLE!**

So, those **LISTENING** were instructed to let their hands **BE STRONG TO CONTINUE** the work. *"Let your hands be strong"* is an idiom for the expression, *"be of good courage."* Those who **HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD** and **ACT ON IT** should be **STRENGTHENED** and **ENCOURAGED** when they see its results!

This **REMNANT** was to survey what had been accomplished since they undertook to **OBEY GOD'S VOICE**. For there was a great contrast between the time before they took up the work of the **TEMPLE** again and the conditions of life since they **HEARKENED** to the **VOICE OF GOD** through **HIS PROPHETS. (Cf. Haggai 1)**

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Now they were **ENCOURAGED** to **CONTINUE** in their **RENEWED OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD** and bring this **GOOD WORK** to conclusion.

These encouraging words are for us today too! For we too have had a **FOUNDATION** to the **ETERNAL TEMPLE OF GOD** previously laid for us through the **DEATH, BURIAL, and RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD!**

We who **HEARD, BELIEVED,** and **ACTED ON GOD'S WORD** are also building a **TEMPLE OF GOD**, not of bricks and mortar but of the **LIVING STONES**, of **GOD'S PRECIOUS PEOPLE!**

So we are to *“let our hands be strong!”* in the **LORD's** work!

Galatians 6:9-10—“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. 10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

We are to **CONTINUE** in our **OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S COMMANDS** for our time on this earth also!

Verse 10 recalls to memory the condition society was in before they **RETURNED** to the **WORK OF THE LORD. GOD** wanted them realize the contrast of the **present** where they were **OBEYING THE WORD OF GOD**, to the **past** when they did not. *“Before these days”* refers to the time before decisive action was taken to restart the **TEMPLE** building project.

Those former days when they were focused on themselves and everything around them but **GOD** were the days of **SELFISHNESS** and **SCARCITY**.

They had selfishly neglected the task of rebuilding the **TEMPLE** for seventeen long years (*Haggai 1:2-6*) and consequently, those were days of severe **ECONOMIC** and **SPIRITUAL DEPRESSION!** They should have been thankful that those days were behind them!

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Three examples of contrast are chosen to illustrate the comparison. **First**, unfruitful labor affected both man and beast. So little was being produced that it did not pay the labor of man or beast.

Second, crime in the streets was rampant. It was unsafe to go about one's business. Travel was dangerous because their adversaries stole all peace, safety, tranquility and security from society [*Ezra 4:1-5*].

Third, there was not only **OPPRESSION** from their **ENEMIES**, but there was also **CONFLICT** among their **BRETHREN!**

It was a time of **ANXIETY** and **STRAIN** because things were going from bad to worse. Rather than being helpful towards one another and having a spirit of community that would develop out of restoring the **TEMPLE**, there had developed infighting instead.

This infighting was part of **GOD'S CHASTISEMENT** of **HIS PEOPLE** for getting their priorities wrong. It should have alerted them to the fact that there was something fundamentally wrong with the way they were living. Those days must have been very evil and discouraging.

What was the problem? **GOD'S PEOPLE** did not put **GOD AND HIS WORK OF TEMPLE BUILDING** as their **FIRST PRIORITY!**

We too may be **TEMPTED** at times to slow down our **WORK FOR THE LORD**. There are many reasons:

We don't see people responding;

We get emotionally or physically drained;

We get discouraged over others not doing anything;

We get discouraged because the work seems too difficult;

We may feel like our efforts aren't appreciated.

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We need to let **GOD'S PROMISES** about the future **ENCOURAGE** us! **HE** knows what the results of our labors will be! We need to see our labors from **GOD'S PERSPECTIVE** and **CONTINUE FAITHFULLY WORKING FOR HIM!**
Hebrews 6:10—“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

1 Corinthians 15:58—“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

WE SEE THAT THE LORD SPOKE OF BOTH THE PRESENT AND THE PAST.

II. WE SEE THE LORD PROMISED RENEWED FRUITFULNESS. (Vs. 11-12)

Verse 11 indicates that a new era was about to begin.

The **LORD** had terminated their former harsh conditions and informed them of His dramatic change of attitude toward them!

HE was establishing a new agenda to help bring about their prosperity because the reasons that caused **HIS DISCOURAGEMENT** had passed!

The group who would experience the **LORD'S** changed dealings was the **REPENTANT REMNANT**. The **LORD'S PROMISE** here was to **END HIS DISCIPLINARY ACTIVITY** and **REWARD HIS PEOPLE!** (*Cf. Haggai 2:19*)

This statement brought to the forefront the fact that the **LORD'S** attitude toward **HIS PEOPLE** was the primary cause that made for either their **BLESSING** or their **FAILURE!**

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This promised change would be visible through their productivity!
(*Read Vs. 12*)

What was previously lacking would now be available. The **LORD PROMISED** them the opportunity for prosperity. The drought, the scarcity, and the general economic depression would give way to increased fruitfulness and productivity of their economy! There would be natural fruitfulness of the crops themselves.

In a dry land the daily dews are **GOD SENT BLESSINGS!** Because the daily dews were the main source of moisture for the land of **ISRAEL.**

Notice that it was **GOD** who was going to make it happen! The responsiveness of the people gave **GOD'S COVENANT RELATIONSHIP** the open door to pour out **HIS BLESSINGS.**

The improved conditions that the **RESTORED REMNANT** had been experiencing since they sincerely set themselves to the task of building **GOD'S TEMPLE**, were only a **PLEDGE** of the **GREATER BLESSINGS** that **GOD** was **PROMISING** them!

Since they had **HEEDED THE PROPHETIC WARNINGS, REPENTED,** and taken up the work of rebuilding, **GOD** would **BLESS** them in all their ways!

Again, it is not human effort or even nature's effort that makes for our prosperity! **OUR PROSPERITY IS THE GRACIOUS GIFT OF GOD!**