

Zech. 8:1-23 "City of Promise"

For the Children: I enjoy visiting new cities, especially the famous ones – London, Paris, New York, Beijing. But it often happens that these cities are not quite so marvelous as I expected. God promised His people a city, a New Jerusalem more marvelous than they had ever seen before. It would not be marvelous because of its sky-scrapers, parades or shopping streets. It would be great because it would show God's truth and faithfulness in removing the sin of His people and blessing them. It would be great because of the joy of its people. All that would come because God would live among His people – in the Lord Jesus. We become citizens of that City when we believe in Him. We will see that City best when we are with Him, face-to-face. **Questions:** How does God assure us in this chapter that He will keep His promises? Why should God's children be filled with joy? How does this chapter help God's people to get busy serving Him?

Introduction:

First Point: The City of Renewal

- 1) The Assurance from God's Jealousy: God's "exceeding" jealousy (v. 2) promises renewal and restoration. His jealousy is His zeal to defend His people from any attack – either from their own sin, or in this case, from external enemies like the Babylonians and the peoples around Jerusalem. The fact that God is the "Lord of Hosts" – stated 17 times in the chapter – stresses the point that He has the power to do this.
- 2) The Assurance from the Covenant: Vss. 1-17 apply the covenant promises to assure Judah of renewal and restoration as well. God will dwell in the midst of His people, in the Temple on Mt. Zion, to be their God and have them as His people. His presence will ensure that they receive the promises of land, increase, security and peace. They will be a blessing to the nations. As a result, Jerusalem will be the city that shows God's "Truth," His faithfulness – and His people's faithful response. The super-abundance of blessings is expressed in physical terms of seed, vines and land – replacing the poverty, hardship and internal divisions they had been experiencing. These promises are too "big" to be fulfilled in the literal Jerusalem. They point to the New Jerusalem brought in by Christ.
- 3) Assurance from Past Judgement: God's warning of Exile had been fulfilled already; therefore, the people should trust His promise of restoration – which is just as certain to be fulfilled (vss. 14-15). God's people should realize that the things which are impossible for men are not impossible for God (v. 17).
- 4) The Call to Respond: In response, the people should re-double their efforts at re-building – "Let your hands be strong" (vss. 9, 13); they should not allow themselves to be paralyzed by fear (vss. 13, 15); they should be busy ministering to each other, with truth, justice and peace – rather than planning evil against each other, loving perjury etc. (vss. 16-17).

Second Point: The City of Joy

- 1) Feasts Not Fasts: The promise of joy in the New Jerusalem also spurs the people on in their work (vss. 18-23). Here the Lord answers the question about fasting from 7:2-3. He does not say that fasts are forbidden, but that the mourning over Exile should be replaced by the joy of the feast (vss. 18-19). Jerusalem is to become the City of Feasts (Is. 33:20).
- 2) Joy and Mourning in the New Covenant: This promise of joy is fulfilled in Christ. See Mt. 9:14-15, 11:16-19. There is still a place for sorrow in the new covenant (Mt. 5:4; Rom. 7:24) – since sin still remains in us; but that grief is placed in the context of forgiveness of sins through the Lord Jesus. The Bridegroom has come! See Rom. 7:25 and Phlp. 4:4.
- 3) The Joy of the Gentile Inclusion: The joy is further increased by the knowledge that many more share in it in the new covenant. For the Gentiles are brought into the covenant (vss. 20-23). The Gentiles have been blessed through the Jews (v. 23 with Jn. 4:22)
- 4) The Call to Respond: These promises are so great, and such a cause for joy, that we should respond by loving God's Truth and peace – His Word of Truth, His Son, and the blessings He brings.

Conclusion: