

Zechariah 8:1-8 - Reasons not to stray from the Lord

Trapp, Delitzsch, TSK, Handfuls, HebrewLexicon, Henry, QT, Clarke, Geneva, JFB, Poole, Barnes, Gill, Phillip? 128, 2, 3, 15, 43, 48, 87, 118
Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: If you have a great job that meets your needs and gives you security but you just get bored, should you just leave? If you have a great marriage but you think that someone might make you happier, should you just leave? If you have a solid church where the 3 marks of a true church are evident but you just want something different, should you just up and leave? I hope you would answer “no” on all 3 occasions. And yet, as good as all these are all things are (job, spouse, church), there could be legitimate (合法的) parting of ways. The boss might want you to do something improper. A spouse might become unfaithful. A church might depart from truth.

But you never, ever have reasons to ever stray (偏离) from the Lord. Today, hear 3 reasons you should never stray from him.

Our headings are:

God's Passion for his people

God's Presence with his people

God's Promise to his people

Our goals are: That seeing the riches you have in Jesus, you will never stray from him but remain faithful in belief and life.

God's Passion for his people

1 Again the word of the LORD of hosts (万军之耶和华) came, saying, 2 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; With great fervor I am zealous for her.'

1. God started this prophesy by reminding his people that he was the Lord of hosts... meaning that he had the power to protect his people and destroy their enemies. And who gets tired of hearing of such wonderful blessing of safety?

2. God would destroy his people's enemies because he had great zeal and fervor for his people.

Zeal is similar to the word for “jealous” or “passionate.” God can be properly jealous because he does everything perfectly. Fervor means intense passion or fury. In this context it means “intense passion.”

3. But why would the Lord have zeal and fervor for people who were so rebellious?

a. Jehovah loved Judah with a singular love and chose her to be his bride. He doesn't abandon his bride.

b. Jehovah would be glorified through Judah. Jesus, who brings glory to the Father, would come from Judah, his Bride.

c. Jehovah's bride that had become a prostitute (娼妓) was repentant (悔改的). Look at how her fall was depicted (被描述) by God before!

Isaiah 1:21 How the faithful city has become a harlot (妓女)! It was full of justice (公平) ;

Righteousness (公义) lodged in it, But now murderers.

4. Lessons:

a. Ministers are to speak words of rebuke (guilt and condemnation) and words of encouragement (which brings joy and gladness) to God's people. They are not to choose one or the other; God's people need both. So watch out for “doom and gloom-ers.” (持悲观沮丧观点的人) And watch out for those who always paint a rosy picture.

b. Know that the Lord has passion for you. He will destroy your enemies – the Devil and all his people – to keep you safe. He does this, not because you are good, but because he is good! Don't fear the enemies of this world!

God's Presence with his people

3 "Thus says the LORD: 'I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the LORD of hosts, The Holy Mountain.'

1. God promised he would come back to Jerusalem. In the past Ezekiel saw the glory cloud of God leave, but not anymore!

2. God promised he would not only come back but he would live among his people also. He would not be a visitor.

3. God promised he would live among his people again because Jerusalem would become known again as the city of truth Jerusalem, because of the truth that is proclaimed, would be known for holiness. The Word of God convicts (证明...有罪) and guides God's people into holy living.

John 17:17 "**Sanctify (使...成圣) them by Your truth.** Your word is truth.

This is what God had said before captivity (被掳) !

Isaiah 1:26 I will restore your judges (审判官) as at the first, And your counselors (谋士) as at the beginning. Afterward you **shall be called the city of righteousness,** the faithful city."

4. Lessons:

a. Were it not for the Word of God there would be no standard of righteousness by which you might live. This exemplifies the troubles we have as the West has rejected God's truth and replaced it with esoteric (秘传的) truth - no ultimate standard – but a moving standard. Yet God's Word stands forever.

b. Since Jerusalem never fully acquired these blessings after captivity, and since God's promises never fail, you can be sure that these promises will be fulfilled in the future in Jerusalem... in the real Jerusalem...the church.

Revelation 14:1 Then I looked, and behold, **a Lamb standing on Mount Zion,** and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.

Isaiah 2:2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days **That the mountain of the LORD'S house Shall be established on the top of the mountains,** And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. 3 Many people shall come and say, "**Come, and let us go up to the mountain** of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; **He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.**" For out of Zion shall go forth the law, **And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.**

The Lord Jesus commanded his Word to go out under his authority to bring righteousness and holiness. Matthew 28.

God's Promise to his people

4 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: '**Old men and old women shall again sit In the streets** of Jerusalem, Each one with his staff in his hand Because of great age.

1. Old people shall sit in the streets of Jerusalem. These old people would be so old they needed staffs – third legs.

a. In the past, the streets of Jerusalem were filled with dead bodies or with old men and women begging, but not anymore. Now they would sit and chat – a very Middle Eastern thing to do.

b. This meant that there would not be untimely (过早的 , 不合时的) deaths... or premature deaths. People would live to a ripe old age.

c. This meant there was peace, as no one sits down in the middle of war.

5 The streets of the city **Shall be full of boys and girls Playing in its streets.'**

2. Children shall play in the streets of Jerusalem again; not fighting.

a. The future would look bright again...as children are a symbol of the future. That is what God intended!

Genesis 1:28..."**Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it;** have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

b. They would have many children – full quivers. (箭筒)

Psalms 127:5 **Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them;** They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

c. The children would be healthy active children with nothing to fear. Consider what Jeremiah saw before captivity.

Lamentations 2:11 My eyes fail with tears, My heart is troubled; My bile is poured on the ground Because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, Because the **children and the infants Faint in the streets of the city.** 12 They say to their mothers, "Where is grain and wine?" As **they swoon like the wounded In the streets of the city,** As their life is poured out In their mothers' bosom.

6 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'If it is **marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people** in these days, **Will it also be marvelous in My eyes?'** Says the LORD of hosts.

3. God's people would find it marvelous when they are in peace and he would find it marvelous when the people are in peace in Jerusalem also. (Young's Literal: "...*Surely it is wonderful in the eyes of the remnant of this people in those days, Also in Mine eyes it is wonderful...*" This is a better translation. This is not a question.) God's people would know this was the work

of God...Like Abraham when Sarah conceived (怀孕), or when Naaman was cured of his leprosy (大麻疯) . **So the Jews would be blessed with awe!**

7 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Behold, **I will save My people from the land** of the east And from the land of the west;

4. God would save his people from their awful worldwide enemies and bring them back to Jerusalem – Judah and Israel. They would not want to stay in those foreign lands. This was promised long before captivity as well.

Jeremiah 31:23 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "They shall again use this speech in the land of Judah and in its cities, when I **bring back their captivity**: 'The LORD bless you, O home of justice, and **mountain of holiness!**'

Isaiah 11:11 ... the Lord shall set His hand again the second time **To recover the remnant of His people** who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea. 12 He will set up a **banner for the nations**, And will **assemble the outcasts** (被赶散的人) **of Israel**, And gather together the **dispersed of Judah** (分散的犹太人) From the four corners of the earth.

This is the holy catholic church. 1Peter 2 reminds you that those who were not a people of God would become his people.

8 I will bring them back, And they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people And I will be their God. In truth and righteousness.'

5. God would restore his covenant relationship with his people. They would obey his laws. Look at the promise.

Jeremiah 31:33 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God**, and they shall be My people.

Ezekiel 11:20 "that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and **I will be their God**."

Of course this could only happen as they **looked to the coming Savior** – the only one who could make things right for them.

6. Lessons:

a. Any nation that honors the Lord (believing truth and living it) will receive his approbation and will even receive specific temporal (时间的 , 现世的) promises.

Deuteronomy 4:40 "You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, **that it may go well with you and with your children after you**, and that you may **prolong your days in the land** which the LORD your God is giving you **for all time**."

Isaiah 65:22 They shall not build and another inhabit; They shall not plant and another eat; For as the days of a tree, **so shall be the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands**.

So don't doubt God like the Psalmist accounts.

Psalms 78:19 Yes, they spoke against God: They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? 20 Behold, He struck the rock, So that the waters gushed out, And the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for His people?"

b. The nation that does not honor God may appear to be successful but will ultimately receive God's condemnation.

c. Most Western countries that claim to be Christian have a declining population by refusing to have children. Our only increase is through immigration. This means our future is not good. Take note.

d. These promises only found partial and temporary fulfillment after Zechariah and before Jesus. (These promises couldn't have been limited to people coming to an earthly Jerusalem as all the nations would not have fitted there.)

Since God's Word never fails, you can be sure that God will **fulfill this promise in the future**. Don't think because you see a dearth in the church today that God is unable to fulfill this promise! Israel found its fulfillment in the New Testament church. The church is the Israel of God! You are New Jerusalem!

Galatians 6:16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, **and upon the Israel of God**.

Conclusion:

God encouraged his people by telling them of his passion for them, his presence with them, and his promises to them.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. So when you are discouraged and want to stray from the Lord, remember his passion – his zeal for you, remember that he is present with you to keep you safe and teach you, and remember his promises...his promises of security from sin...and for your supplies in this life.

2. When you remember these promises you will draw closer to him. Who leaves when there is love?

3. You only get these promises if you are a child of God through Jesus Christ...through his shed blood.

Finally: Obadiah wrote: "But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, And there shall be holiness; The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." (在锡安山必有逃脱的人，那山也必成圣；雅各家必得原有的产业。) Do you want this deliverance? Ask God to give it to you because Jesus paid for freedom for sinners. Without this deliverance is death!