

God Remembered Zechariah

Introduction

His name was Zechariah. It means “*God remembered*”, and in order to understand his ministry, it is important to understand his history. Zechariah was a Jew, descended from the tribe of Levi, the tribe of the priests. But he had never been allowed to serve as a priest, for he was born into captivity in Babylon. The time of his birth was more than likely somewhere between 550-540 BC, for his calling came in the year of 520 BC, and his writings describe him as a “young man” at the time (***Zechariah 2:4***). Although he was from the tribe of Levi, until his pilgrimage back to the land of his forefathers in 538 BC, he had never observed a single Jewish ritual sacrifice, never taken part in the annual feast days of his forefathers, nor even seen the beloved Jewish temple, for the temple of Solomon had been completely destroyed after King Nebuchadnezzar had invaded the land and carried its captives away to Babylon.

God had warned the Israelites that their idol worship along with their careless disregard of His statutes would result in them being led away as captives. But the people gave no real heed to the warnings. They believed, as many religious but yet unfaithful people tend to believe, that God would never really make good on His promises of judgement. In short, they took the grace of God for granted, and as a result, they were led away in bondage to the pagan city of Babylon. But God in His mercy had foreordained that His chosen people would not remain in bondage forever. So, He set a specific time limit as to their captivity... seventy years.

“But you have not obeyed Me’—this is the LORDs declaration—‘with the result that you have angered Me by the work of your hands and brought disaster on yourselves.’

“Therefore, this is what the LORD of Armies says: ‘Because you have not obeyed My words, I am going to send for all the families of the north’—this is the LORD’s declaration—‘and send for My servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and I will bring them against this land, against its residents, and against all these surrounding nations, and I will completely destroy them and make them an example of horror and scorn, and ruins forever. I will eliminate the sound of joy and gladness from them—the voice of the groom and the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. This whole land will become a desolate ruin, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years.’
Jeremiah 25:7-11

So God, raised up a pagan king, namely Nebuchadnezzar, to punish the people that He loved so dearly. For our God is sovereign, and His promises are always kept. And He is able to use even those who do not know Him in order to do His bidding. Nebuchadnezzar had no idea that he was merely a pawn in the hands of The Almighty, but that is what he was nonetheless. And just as God raised him up for such a purpose, He could also bring him, and his mighty kingdom, down just as quickly and without effort. It would be wise for us to always remember that there is no one who can stand against the power of our God.

Just as God had spoken through the prophets of Israel’s captivity in Babylon, He also foretold of one who would deliver them after the seventy years of captivity had ended. The Prophet Isaiah spoke of the great deliverer named Cyrus, who would allow the Jews to return their homeland after the seventy years were completed.

**...I AM The LORD, Who made everything:
Who stretched out the heavens by Myself:
Who alone spread out the earth:**

**Who destroys the omens of the false prophets and makes fools of diviners:
Who confounds the wise and makes their knowledge foolishness:**

**Who confirms the message of his servant
and fulfills the counsel of his messengers:
Who says to Jerusalem, "She will be inhabited."
and to the cities of Judah, "They will be rebuilt." and I will restore her ruins:**

Who says to the depths of the sea, "Be dry," and I will dry up your rivers:

**Who says to Cyrus, "My shepherd, he will fulfill all My pleasure"
and says to Jerusalem, "She will be rebuilt,"
and of the temple, "Its foundation will be laid."**

Isaiah 44:24b-28

Cyrus The Great, king of Persia, indeed overthrew the great city of Babylon in 539 BC during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar's grandson Belshazzar. And shortly thereafter, the king issued a decree allowing all foreign captives to return to their homelands in 538 BC. But it is important to know that Isaiah gave his prophesy of this great deliverer of God's people, even calling him by name, approximately 150 years before Cyrus was born! This is a perfect illustration of the sovereignty of God. He raises up whomever He chooses in order to do His mighty will.

After the decree of Cyrus The Persian, many of the Jewish captives (numbering around fifty thousand **Ezra 2:64-65**) made their way back to their homeland, only to find it in utter ruins. Zechariah more than likely returned home at that time as well, probably with his grandfather *Iddo* (meaning *timely*). Zechariah was probably only a young boy when he saw his homeland for the first time. Perhaps his grandfather had told him of what the city once was, and even tried to describe the splendor of its grand temple. It must have been hard for the young man to even imagine the former glory when he first laid eyes upon the ruins. Oh the terrible price to pay for rebellion against God. One can only imagine the impact this terrible sight had upon the child. It is conceivable that he became determined in that moment to live his life in honor to The God to whom his forebears had so carelessly forsaken.

But upon returning to their beloved homeland, the Jews discovered that not only would the task of rebuilding the temple be difficult, in and of itself, but they also encountered fierce opposition to the project (see **Ezra** and **Nehemiah**). Not to mention that many of the Israelites had married foreign women, who could not have cared less about Israel's God, nor for the restoration of His temple. So after a few short seasons, the reconstruction came to a standstill. And for nearly eighteen years, very little progress had been made.

It was at this time God raised up two prophets simultaneously to warn the people not to disregard His commands or leave His house in disrepair. These two men were the older Haggai, and the young man Zechariah. Possibly due to the fact that according to Hebrew law a testimony was only considered valid if offered by at least two credible witnesses (**Deuteronomy 19:15**), did God raise up these two men at this time. But whatever the reason, their prophecies began within two months of each other; Haggai in the sixth month of the year 520 BC, and Zechariah in the eighth month (**Haggai 1:1; Zechariah 1:1**). Cyrus The Great was dead, and now Darius the Great reigned over the Medo-Persian empire in his stead. It was in the second year of his reign (520 BC) that God called His two prophets to awake his slumbering people and spur them to action. God would be honored, and His temple reconstructed, or there would be consequences.

It is a fairly common misconception among many religious people that difficulty is a sign from God to proceed no further. We tell ourselves that if God wanted us to do a particular task, then all obstacles would be miraculously removed so that we then could proceed with very little effort. This is a ridiculous notion in and of itself for it does not take into consideration the spiritual warfare that we are bound to face when we endeavor to do God's will (see **Ephesians 6:10-20**). We have an adversary who will do

anything within his power to stop us from our work of faith. So what should we do when we have a word from God, and yet, we encounter opposition? We press on, in faith, knowing that God's plans cannot be thwarted, and we will reap a harvest in due season, if we don't give up (**Galatians 6:9**).

Sadly, the easy discouragement of men is the same today as it was during Zechariah's time. Because the people had faced opposition in the reconstruction of God's temple in Jerusalem, they simply gave up on it. And for eighteen long years since Cyrus' decree to return and rebuild, very little progress had been made. The people had abandoned the work to build houses and plant crops for themselves rather than focus on the house of God. So God first sent Haggai, and then Zechariah, to remind the people that God that His kingdom is to be the top priority of His people.

In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest:

"The LORD of Armies says this: These people say: The time has not come for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt."

The word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: "Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?" Now, the LORD of Armies says this: "Think carefully about your ways:

You have planted much, but harvested little.

You eat, but never have enough to be satisfied.

You drink, but never have enough to be happy.

You put on clothes, but never have enough to get warm.

The wage earner puts his wages into a bag with a hole in it."

The LORD of Armies says this: "Think carefully about your ways. Go up into the hills, bring down lumber, and build the house; and I will be pleased with it and be glorified," says the LORD. "You expected much, but then it amounted to little. When you brought the harvest to your house, I ruined it. Why?" This is the declaration of the LORD of Armies. "Because my house still lies in ruins, while each of you is busy with his own house.

So on your account, the skies have withheld the dew and the land its crops.

I have summoned a drought on the fields and the hills,

on the grain, new wine, fresh oil, and whatever the ground yields,

on people and animals, and on all that your hands produce." Haggai 1:1-11

It is never a wise decision to prioritize your own needs above the things of God. For in order to be blessed by our Heavenly Father, He is to be given preeminence. Jesus said it this way:

"So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear? For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your Heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.'" Matthew 6:31-33

So when Zechariah came to warn the people of their lack of commitment to The LORD just two short months after God had stirred the heart of Haggai, the people were beginning to listen. For the prophet reminded them of the captivity of their fathers, thus warning them that God was not to be trifled with. The lesson learned by seventy years of Babylonian servitude should have been a wake up call for God's chosen people.

In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah, son of Iddo: "The LORD was extremely angry with your ancestors. So tell the people, 'This is what the LORD of Armies says: Return to me—this is the declaration of the Lord of Armies — and I will return to you, says the LORD of Armies. Zechariah 1:1-3

Notice how many times the prophet mentions The Name of The LORD in his opening statement. It was intended to remind the people to Whom they belonged and owed their allegiance. We could not even take our next breath were it not for His grace. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to worship Him in spirit and in truth. The house of God must not be neglected at the expense of our own selfish desires. We must "seek first His kingdom," and then the blessings will follow. This is a wakeup call that we all need from time to time is it not?

I once heard an old fable about Satan having a production meeting with three of his top demons. They were discussing strategies for crowding as many people into hell as possible. The first demon suggested, "I will go and tell them there is no God." To which Satan replied, "That will never work. Deep down even the worst of pagan hearts knows there is a God, and that they are not right with Him."

The second demon then spoke up and suggested, "Then I will tell them that there is no hell." "That won't work either." said the devil, "For they all know that there is a price to pay for their evil ways."

Then the third demon interjected, "Then I will tell them there is no hurry." To which Satan replied, "That it the perfect strategy! It will insure that multitudes of people will end up in hell just as we desire."

It is a foolish thing to leave the things of God in ruins. For this life is short, and none of us know when our final day will come. So it is important to put God first in all that we do. It is vital that we are ready when the final judgment comes. For:

Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to The Spirit will reap eternal life from The Spirit. Galatians 6:7-8

In the end, its all about priorities, my friends, and we would do well to remember that the low road will never lead us to high ground!

Zechariah is a book given to remind us of these things. It redirects our attention to The God Who keeps His promises..... all of them. This God assures us that if He is our first priority then all things truly will "**work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to His purpose**" (**Romans 8:28**).

I am a firm believer that every word of Scripture is significant in its choosing by The Holy Spirit. And in the opening statement of Zechariah's prophecy, there are three names mentioned in a specific order. Zechariah, his father Berechiah, and his grandfather Iddo. These three names mean respectively, *God remembered*, *God blesses*, and *In due time*. What a wonderful promise to us all, who seek to follow after His will. ***God remembers His people, and He will bless us, in due time!*** So, let us study this wonderful book of prophecy together, and we will see for ourselves how our God plans to do just that!

TRUTH!!!