

**God Remembered**  
**Zechariah**  
 Chapter 1

**Introduction**

**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. Do not be like your ancestors; the earlier prophets proclaimed to them: This is what The LORD of Armies says: Turn from your evil ways and your evil deeds. But they did not listen or pay attention to Me — this is The LORD'S declaration. Where are your ancestors now? And do the prophets live forever? But didn't My words and My statutes that I commanded My servants the prophets overtake your ancestors?'" So the people repented and said, "As The LORD of Armies decided to deal with us for our ways and our deeds, so He has dealt with us."** **Zechariah 1:1-6**

When God raised up Haggai and Zechariah to proclaim his word to the post-exilic Jews who had returned to their beloved homeland, He had but one thing to say, "Repent." For you see, just because the Jews had returned home did not mean that they had returned to The LORD. For just as soon as they encountered difficulty in rebuilding God's Temple, they had abandoned the work and directed their attention to their own personal affairs. As a result, God saw to it that the fruits of their labor were diminished, and all their efforts to obtain personal gain were thwarted (**Haggai 1:1-6**).

While God did desire to pour out a blessing upon His chosen people, He would not do so until their hearts were made right toward Him and His purposes. The low road will never lead to high ground. And if we wish to have the favor of God upon our lives, then our living must become synchronous with His plan for us. As Christ has told us, **"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you."** (**Matthew 6:33**). Every child of God should know this one truth, God will not bless over sin. To do so would be to go against His holy nature. So, without repentance, there can be no blessing.

The word that Zechariah used in this passage, translated "return" is *shuwb* in the Hebrew text, and although it has many uses, in this context it speaks of repentance, the turning away from one direction to go in another. God promised the people that if they would repent and "return to Him" then He would also return to them (**vs. 3**). This was the only way that He would do for His beloved Israel all that He intended for them. Our God is a God of love, mercy, and grace, and while all of these are readily available to us, they cannot be obtained unless we do as He commands.

There are great debates that rage within church circles these days regarding God's *sovereignty* and man's *freewill*. And many theologians will come down heavily on one side or the other, often causing major theological rifts between God's people. I, for one, do not claim to have all the answers on the subject. But this I do know, our God is sovereign, which means that He is in complete control. However, He has, in His sovereignty, granted mankind with the ability to choose the right or the wrong. This is also a reality made clear in Scripture (ie. **Deuteronomy 30:19; Joshua 24:14-15**).

So, I do not presuppose exactly how these two realities work themselves out with one another, I simply trust God's Word. The way the ingredients of sovereignty and freewill are harmonized in The Father's plan are far above my pay grade. So my advice to those theologians who seem to ascribe to their respective points of view is simple; "You can sharpen a pencil to the point that the lead will break when you attempt to write with it. So why not just trust God to work out the inexplicable, and simply concentrate on those things that He has given you the full competency to explain?" We know, that in

order to draw near to God, we must believe and trust His Word. And we also know that we cannot even trust His Word unless His Spirit gives us the supernatural ability to do so (**Ephesians 2:8**). But even so, we still have to trust, obey, and repent. It is a symbiotic relationship that only God can fully comprehend, and I am fine with that. I just know that I want to be in that relationship with Him. I want Him to accept me. So, I am willing to trust in Him completely and believe that He will do as He has promised.

Now, returning to The LORD's declaration to Israel, "**If you repent and turn to Me, then I will return to you.**" Our Savior gave us the perfect illustration of this kind of "turning" in His parable of the prodigal son (**Luke 15:11-32**). The wicked son mistakenly believed that he could make it on his own without his father's guiding presence. But when he attempted to live out his life of rebellion, he quickly realized his mistake. He returned home, not expecting to find true forgiveness, but was willing to become one of his father's hired hands. Not only did the father run to meet his wayward son, he fully restored him as if he had never left. This is a beautiful insight into the very heart of our Heavenly Father, Who longs to restore us, if we will just admit our failures and return to His loving embrace.

And while The Father is willing and able to accept the returning prodigal, He will *not* restore the wandering soul apart from genuine repentance. So He offered a warning to the Jews who had returned from Babylon, reminding them of the agonizing captivity that had overtaken their fathers (**vs.4**). God had warned His rebellious people over and over again through the prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, that unless they repented from their evil ways, they would be severely punished. Unfortunately for them, they did not heed the warnings. And as a result, they lost everything and were lead away in chains to Babylonian. Sin always comes at a premium price, and they had paid dearly for their transgressions. When they realized the gravity of their recklessness, it was far to late. They were indeed sorrowful, but the damage was done.

**By the rivers of Babylon — there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. There we hung up our lyres on the poplar trees, for our captives there asked us for songs, and our tormentors, for rejoicing: "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." How can we sing The LORD'S song on foreign soil? Psalm 137:1-4**

So God reminded His people that just as He had punished their forefathers, He would do so again if necessary. He declared to the people that He was "*extremely angry*" with their ancestors. In fact, in the original text the word for anger is repeated twice, as if to say that God was doubly angry over the people's rebellious ways. Which begs the question as to why God refused to just allow these people to go their own way. Why did He not just give up on them and leave them to be scattered at the hands of their many enemies? The answer to this question is simple. It is because God always remembers His promises. And just as He promised Abraham the world would be blessed through his offspring (**Genesis 12:3**), He would see to it that this promise was also kept. The Messiah, the LORD Jesus Christ was a descendant of Abraham's line, and it is through this wondrous Son of promise, that this old world has truly been blessed by God. *God remembers*. So that is why He would not give up on the Jewish people, no matter what.

This same God has also declared that the nation of Israel will one day trust in Christ and find salvation (**Romans 11:11-27**). This promise will also be remembered. And the prophecies of Zechariah also make this clear and certain. *God remembers, and He always does what He says*. This is why, Israel has endured to this day, and it is why they will always endure. The devil has repeatedly tried to devour this tiny group of people, but God will not be thwarted in His plans. His purpose for His chosen people will endure. And you can believe it. Even now, we witness the bloody struggles of Israel, and the hatred for them that is espoused by the ungodly. But never fear. The Sovereign God of Zechariah is still sovereign today.

God reminded the people through Zechariah, that although both the prophets who had warned Israel, along the rebellious ones who had rejected their message were all dead and in their graves, God's Word had endured. And all that He had proclaimed had indeed come to pass (**vs. 5-6**). Our God is not bound by time nor circumstances. His Word is eternal just as He is eternal. As Isaiah the prophet proclaimed:

**The grass withers, the flowers fade when the breath of The LORD blows on them; indeed, the people are grass. The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the Word of our God remains forever. Isaiah 40:7-8**

Life here on earth for us is fleeting, circumstances change. Nations rise and fall, but God is forever. He promises, and He remembers.

Upon hearing The LORD'S declaration, the people of Israel repented (**vs.6**). And the work on the LORD'S temple began again with earnest. But there is something to be learned from the people's response to God's warnings of judgement. They did not make excuses for themselves, nor did they try and pass along blame to their forefathers. Instead they humbly accepted God's proclamation in regards to their own sin, and they repented. And they did so publicly, saying:

**...“As The LORD of Armies decided to deal with us for our ways and our deeds, so He has dealt with us.” Zechariah 1:6b**

Oh, the lessons that we should learn from this response! Genuine godly sorrow, leads to genuine repentance. No excuses offered for our sins, no shifting of the blame to our circumstances, or our societal influences and pressures. Just humble acceptance that God's way is right and our ways are wrong, and then turning from the wrong to the right! How perfect are the words of The Apostle Paul when he declared to the church at Corinth:

**For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, but worldly grief produces death. 2 Corinthians 7:10**

Genuine repentance does not look around for a “fall guy”. It simply and humbly accepts responsibility and agrees with God and His Word. When we respond to The LORD'S rebuke in this way, we will always find love, acceptance, and grace beneath His healing wings. But so many still refuse to do so. This is the world's problem; they refuse to admit when they are wrong and instead angrily reject any correction that is written in the Scriptures. Sadly, by so doing they miss the very same blessings of life that God promised through the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. For Gods' blessings only come through humble obedience.

**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say, “We have not sinned,” we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1 John 1:9-10**

So, just as the children of Israel repented when they were given the Word of God from Zechariah the prophet, we too must always heed God's warnings given in The Holy Scriptures. When *The Bible* shows us that we are wrong, this is not a time for arguments for the justification of our evil doings. It is the time to agree with God and find forgiveness. He promises to forgive, if we will simply respond as He has directed. And He always keeps His promises. *For our God remembers.*

As we continue along in our study of Zechariah, we will see many of the promises that God has given to His chosen people. And we can rest assured that God will remember each and every one of those promises. God has a plan and a purpose for Israel, just as He has a plan and a purpose for His Church. These two groups will follow very different paths, but God has laid out His will for each, and because He is sovereign, we can rest assured that nothing will hinder His purposes. For our God always remembers.

Shortly after Zechariah's initial confrontation with the children of Israel, The LORD sent him eight powerful visions, things regarding both Israel's present and future condition. There is much to be learned as we see God laying out His plans, as well as His protection of the people that He has chosen as His very own. As we look to the Scriptures to see all that God has promised, we can truly get a sense of just

how powerful is This God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is as Daniel said, the “great revealer of mysteries” (**Daniel 2:29**). And when He speaks the word, all that He has spoken will indeed come to pass. Not one of His prophesies shall remain unfulfilled. For our God promises and what He has promised... *He remembers!* And as for Israel The LORD of Armies has declared:

**For this is what The LORD says: “When seventy years for Babylon are complete, I will attend to you and will confirm My promise concerning you to restore you to this place. For I know the plans I have for you” — this is The LORD's declaration — “plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you” — This is The LORD's declaration — “and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations where I banished you”— This is The LORD'S declaration. “I will restore you to the place from which I deported you.”** **Jeremiah 29:10-17**

**Truth!!!**