

Post-Exile Prophets: Zechariah
GOD IS WITH YOU
Friday, July 11
Reading: Zechariah 8:17-23

Zechariah 8:23 *This is what the LORD Almighty says: "In those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.' "*

As Zechariah's message concludes, God returns to their original question about fasting. The 10th month remembered the start of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 52:4). The 4th month remembered the Babylonians breaking through the wall after a long siege (Jeremiah 39:2). The fifth month remembered the destruction of the temple itself (Jeremiah 52:12-13). The 7th month remembered the assassination of Gedaliah, the Jewish governor appointed by Babylon (Jeremiah 41:1-2). These fasts are still celebrated by faithful Jews today – remembering the destruction of the first temple by Babylon (586 BC) and the second temple by the Romans (AD 70).

The Jewish people were still mourning for the past. Now God instructs them to look to the future. God would turn these days of fasting into days of feasting. One day, instead of being invaded by enemy nations, Jerusalem would be the destination for all nations who want to "seek the LORD Almighty." With this future in mind, God instructs His people to "love truth and peace." This ties back in with the instruction God had given His people in 8:16-17! God's people can show His truth and peace to the world because they know in that future day God's truth and peace will reign supreme. All people will desire to worship with the Jewish nation because "we have heard that God is with you."

That day has not yet arrived. Jerusalem is still the center of turmoil and controversy, with enemies on every side. God's full blessings cannot come to Israel until they recognize, repent, and receive their Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) – a day that Zechariah will describe later in this book. Today, we need to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6) and pray for the salvation of Israel (Romans 10:1).

While we wait for the return of Jesus Christ, we can still experience His joy, peace, and truth in our lives today. At Christmas we speak the name Immanuel – which means 'God with us.' Despite the sin and persecution in our world today, God is with those who trust and follow Him. Our lives should cause people to ask us, "Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you" (8:23).

Perspective changes everything! We can view the present in light of the past. This can be helpful at times, but it can also lead to self-pity and despair, as it did with these ancient Jewish people. Or we can view the present in light of the future. This takes a lot of faith, for we cannot see the future. We can only trust in the promises of God. But focusing on God's promises for the future will give us incentive to live holy and faithful lives in the present (see 2 Timothy 4:1-2; Titus 2:11-15).