



PEACE AND JUSTICE REIGN

LESSON 11 – MAY 10, 2020
ABUNDANT HARVEST CHURCH
SUNDAY SCHOOL
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PEACE AND JUSTICE REIGN

BIBLE BASIS: Zechariah 8: 1 - 17

BIBLE TRUTH: The Lord is jealous for the worship of His people, and longs to dwell with them in peace.

MEMORY VERSE: “So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not” (Zechariah 8:15, KJV).

PEACE AND JUSTICE REIGN

LESSON AIM: By the end of the lesson, we will: **IDENTIFY** the impact of God's presence in a community; **YEARN** (desire) for God's continuous presence and the promise of justice it brings; and **PRAY** for God's presence to result in a communal sense of justice, prosperity, and unity.

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON: Sometimes people respond to evil conditions in the world with a sense of hopelessness, regret, and doom. Where can they find motivation for continuing? The prophet Zechariah delivers God's promise of a new world of peace and prosperity for God's people.

LESSON OVERVIEW

BIBLE LEARNING: The presence of God brings peace and justice.

BIBLE APPLICATION: Christians understand that embodying God's peaceful and just reign means telling the truth and being a just people.

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: Believers will commit to being people known by their peace and love for justice.

KEY TERMS TO RECOGNIZE

- **Justice** – the practice of what is right and just. Justice specifies what is right, not only as measured by a code of law, but also by what makes for right relationships as well as harmony and peace.
- **Peace** – the Old Testament meaning was completeness, soundness, and well-being of the total person.
- **Remnant** – the part of a community or nation that remains after a dreadful judgment or devastating calamity, especially those who have escaped and remain to form the nucleus of a new community.

LESSON SCRIPTURE

Zechariah 8: 1 - 17

- 1 Again the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying,
- 2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.
- 3 Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.
- 4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age.
- 5 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.
- 6 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts.
- 7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country;
- 8 And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.
- 9 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.
- 10 For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour.
- 11 But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts.
- 12 For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.
- 13 And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.
- 14 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not:
- 15 So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.
- 16 These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:
- 17 And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.

LIGHT ON THE WORD – THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

- The book of Zechariah was written during the effort of the ancient people of Judah to rebuild the Temple, which had been destroyed by the Babylonians.
- Jews had returned 18 years before Zechariah's appearance to lay the foundation of the Temple, but then the work stopped.
- Zechariah encouraged the people to complete the task of rebuilding the Temple.
- The book of Zechariah teaches that salvation may be obtained by all. The last chapter depicts people from all over the world coming to worship God, who desires all people to follow Him by placing their faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

LIGHT ON THE WORD – THE PROPHET ZECHARIAH

- Zechariah was one of the twelve minor prophets whose collective work concludes the Old Testament.
- Zechariah highlights the importance of acting justly toward others and treating them with kindness and mercy.
- Zechariah wanted to motivate the Jews to rebuild the Temple after their return from exile in Babylonia, but he used a different approach than his contemporary Haggai.
- Prophesying between August and December of 520 BC, Haggai promised the Jews an end to their crop failures and economic misery, giving God's message that "from this day will I bless you" (Haggai 2:19).
- Zechariah, prophesying from 520 BC to perhaps 480 BC, promised them a Messiah who will set up His throne, and rule as the High Priest, who will offer up the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world.

PROPHETS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (OT)

Minor Prophets*

- Zechariah
- Haggai
- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Malachi

Major Prophets

- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Ezekiel
- Daniel

** Minor prophets, also known as the “Book of the Twelve” is a reference to the small size of the books by comparison with the major prophetic books of the OT and is not at all suggestive of the books minor importance. OT prophets were: (1) called by God with a message, (2) declared the message of God boldly and (3) played a significant role in the sovereign plan of God unfolding in human history.*

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON

AIM: Students will be inspired by God's passion for His people.

INTRODUCTION – ENCOURAGING THE REMNANT

- Zechariah's prophetic ministry began in the summer of 520 BC in Jerusalem, in the years between the arrival of the first group of returning captives from Babylonia (536 BC) and the completion of the rebuilding of the Temple (516 BC).
- During the time of Zechariah and Haggai's prophecies, most of the city was still desolate. There was no Temple; it had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Everything around was in ruins.
- Ezra tells us that soon after the remnant Jews arrived in Jerusalem, they embarked on the work of restoring the Temple, starting with the altar (**Ezra 3**). Their intention was to rebuild the Temple, as well, but their drive to work petered out. There were too many distractions, especially from numerous enemies around them.
- Zechariah emerged to be one of the prophets speaking hope and encouragement to the people. Their faith in God had weakened, and they were not motivated to build the temple. They needed to learn and conform to the Law of God again.
- Zechariah is generally characterized as a prophet who challenges the remnants to believe that the Lord would actually remember Zion.
- Zechariah was a visionary prophet who inspired the people as they sought to rebuild the Temple.

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: Students will examine how God relates to His people.

I. GOD IS JEALOUS FOR JUDAH (Zechariah 8:1 – 2)

- Zechariah ministered among a discouraged and indifferent community of people who had returned from Babylon to a city they called home but that looked nothing like it.
- The Lord is quite stern in His assertion, “I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.” God is jealous with a true kind of jealousy and, here, we see how that jealousy shapes God’s relationship with Judah.
- On the one hand, God wants to be the only one receiving Judah’s worship. Israel was not supposed to worship any other gods because the Lord, their God, is a jealous God. When they showed interest in other gods or started to follow the gods of the Gentiles, God’s wrath was unleashed upon them, and they were severely punished.
- However, from the ministry of Zechariah, we learn that God’s jealousy compels Him to return to His people and bring them hope for the future.

I. GOD IS JEALOUS FOR JUDAH (Zechariah 8:1 – 2)

- The situation was dire. There was no hope in the city, and there was no hope for the city. Each person took care of their own property and had no desire or energy to pay attention to the larger community projects, the most important of which was the house of the Lord.
- The presence of the prophets – Zechariah, Haggai, and later, Malachi – shows that God still cared for Judah. As a matter of fact, it is this passionate caring that caused the Lord to be jealous for His people.
- The Lord's jealousy is a result of the covenant relationship that exists between God and Israel. The Lord cares so passionately for Zion that exclusive worship is expected, and when Israel went after other gods, punishment followed.
- God's protective love over Judah now causes His wrath to go after the nations that oppressed her. The Lord promises to act on Zion's behalf and to protect her from surrounding nations that threaten her welfare. This burning love results in an exclusive relationship between the Lord and Judah and would ultimately result in a glorious future.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Question 1

What does it mean for God to be jealous?

Question 2

Do you ever feel God being jealous over other things that try to take His place in your life?

LIGHT ON THE WORD – GOD WANTS YOUR WORSHIP

- Throughout the Old Testament, we read that God has entered into a covenant relationship with Israel. As a part of this covenant, the people of God are to worship Him and Him alone.
- Whenever Israel turned away from the One true God and worshiped other gods, God became angry and jealous for their worship.
- In verses 1 and 2 of Zechariah chapter 8, God is not angry with Israel. Rather, He is angry with surrounding nations who have oppressed Israel.
- As people of God, He is jealous for our worship and is angry with those who seek to lead us astray or harm us.

II. GOD WILL RESTORE JUDAH (ZECHARIAH 8:3-13)

- The Lord now promises not just to return to Zion, but also to dwell among God's people in Jerusalem. This promise of the Lord's return to an abandoned city offers the strongest imaginable encouragement that the Lord is still with Judah and that, because of this, her future is secure.
- Life will return to an unbelievable normalcy; there will be large, growing families in the city, for blessings always mean fertility.
- Rather than measuring the city's health by business or commerce, its wealth will be in two often-overlooked groups: the old and the young.
- May we measure the significance of our cities by their effect on how the young and old live!
- Speaking through the prophet Zechariah, the Lord of hosts makes a four-fold promise to the people: (1) the Lord will save His people from the east and the west, (2) the Lord will bring His people back to Jerusalem where they dwell, (3) the Lord will be their God and they will be the Lord's people and (4) all this will happen in truth and righteousness.

II. GOD WILL RESTORE JUDAH (ZECHARIAH 8:3-13)

- The Lord continues to make promises to the remnant; things would change for Israel now that the Temple is being rebuilt and worship is being restored.
- Now that they have returned, the Lord's attitude toward Israel is changing, and with it, the Lord's actions among the people. The Lord is reversing the economic depression that has made life difficult for the remnant.
- The Lord would rescue His people and change the attitudes of the nations toward them.
- Zechariah realizes that the fulfillment of the promises may take both time and work and, therefore, he urges his audience to let their hands be strong.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Question 3

What scenes of peace does Zechariah's prophecy highlight in verse 12?

Question 4

How do you respond when God says something to you that sounds impossible?

LIGHT ON THE WORD – A BEAUTIFUL, YET SPECIFIC, PROMISE

- Old men and women will have long lives. Children will play together.
- The Jewish diaspora will come home and be together.
- Growth and vegetation abound. Israel will be made strong once again.
- God will save His people and promises sheer abundance and blessing.
- More than anything, however, God's people will turn back to Him and find their ultimate source of joy and satisfaction in Him.
- As the people of God, we will be the recipients of these blessings.

III. JUDAH MUST RETURN TO GOD (ZECHARIAH 8: 14-17)

- The Lord requires the Jews to avoid negative policies that precipitated their fall into exile. They must reform their justice system so that the truth is told and peace is sought.
- Schemes and perjury have no place in a nation God is restoring to fellowship with Him.
- The Lord calls the people to put their trust in God's faithfulness. He had made a promise, and it would be fulfilled.
- The Lord places some ethical requirements upon the people. The people should, as a society, be truthful and just to one another, and seek to live in peace with one another.
- The Lord adds that the people should not devise evil against each other, nor should they love false oath, for the Lord hates these things.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Question 5

How does God promise to relate to Israel now?

Question 6

Why do you think God places a high emphasis on telling the truth?

LIGHT ON THE WORD – THE CHARGE OF JUSTICE

- God charges His people to act in specific ways. We are to tell the truth to one another, act justly, and harbor no ill will toward one another.
- In addition, we are to “love no false oath”, a call to quit lying to one another. Truth and justice go hand in hand, as the truth is what will lead to justice.
- In all situations and circumstance of life, we are to conduct ourselves with honesty and good intentions for other people. This is imperative for us as Christians, who should be known as a people who love truth and justice.

BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: Students will recommit themselves to following the ways of God.

- The principle theme of the text is that God will return to Jerusalem to be the God of His people once again.
- We must return to all parts of the covenant to protect us from falling again into a place removed from God's presence. Covenant keepers do not lie.
- Covenant keepers practice good judgment, especially in a legal setting.
- Covenant keepers want good and not evil for our neighbors.

STUDENTS' RESPONSES

AIM: Students will trust that God's plan is always the best for us.

- God is with us, and He is in control. That is the “chill-pill” that we all need: to know that God is with us.
- He will cause the sun to shine on us again and the dew to water our efforts.
- He will heal us from our sicknesses and save us from the schemes of the enemy. However, He asks us to trust Him with our very lives and obey His every Word.
- Today, I challenge you to take some time to think and write about an area where you can trust God more this week. Share your desire with someone close to you so they can help encourage and remind you.

NEXT WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

LESSON TOPIC: PRACTICE JUSTICE

BIBLE BASIS: Jeremiah 21: 8 – 14

TEACHER: Evangelist Monique Foster