

Session 13

The Narrative of Israel from the Book of Zechariah

– Part 2 –

A. Introduction

1. Two sections of Scripture are important to understanding the issue of Israel. They are Romans 9 to 11 in the New Testament and the book of Zechariah from the Old Testament.
2. These two passages provide a Biblical foundation for understanding the mystery of Israel. They reveal:
 - a. God's heart and zeal for Israel;
 - b. His plan for Israel;
 - c. His redemptive plan for nations through Israel; and
 - d. The narrative of Israel at the End of the Age.

B. Theme and Main Sections of the Book of Zechariah

1. The book of Zechariah was written during the post-exilic period of ancient Israel's history. It consists of 14 chapters and through the prophet Zechariah, God gave many promises to the nation of Israel.
2. The theme of the book of Zechariah is God's zeal for Jerusalem and Israel (Zech. 1:14–17, 8:2).
3. The book of Zechariah gives many specific promises concerning God's End-Time plan for Israel. These promises are primarily found in Zechariah 9 – 14.
4. The book of Zechariah is divided into three main sections:
 - a. The first section: Chapters 1 – 6 (~ 520 B.C.) comprise a series of eight visions that Zechariah received in one night. These visions concern Israel's future destiny and contain four messages of assurance from God.
 - b. The second section: Chapters 7 – 8 (~ 518 B.C.) comprise a further four messages to encourage the Jewish people to complete rebuilding the temple. These messages arose out of the issue of fasting and feasting.
 - c. The third section: Chapters 9 – 14 (undated) are made up of two prophetic oracles that focus, with great detail, on many of the End-Time events surrounding the return of the Messiah and the salvation of Israel.

C. Background of Zechariah 7 and 8

1. Zechariah chapters 7 – 8 occur about two years after the eight visions in Zechariah 1 – 6, which were given around 520 B.C. By this time, the work of rebuilding the temple had been underway for about two years and there was a renewed optimism as God had begun to bless the Jewish exiles who had returned.
2. At this time, a delegation of Jewish people was sent from Bethel to Jerusalem to inquire of the priests and prophets (Zech. 7:2–3). They inquired whether it was still necessary to observe the fasts that had been instituted for the previous 70 to 90 years while they were in exile, as they were beginning to witness breakthroughs.
 - a. These fasts were a response to being exiled to Babylon and the resulting destruction of Solomon’s temple.
 - b. The Jewish exiles instituted them (a total of four fasts over the year) to commemorate and remind themselves of what had happened and why it had happened to them (Zech. 8:18–19).
 - c. These fasts were meant to remind themselves that Israel had turned away from God, and thus God had judged them.
3. It is in this context that the Lord spoke a message to the Jewish people in Zechariah 7 – 8.

D. God’s Message to Israel through Zechariah 7 – 8

1. God’s primary message to Israel was to call them to a wholehearted response to Him because of His zeal for Jerusalem, His commitment to restore her, and His grace towards her. He was calling them to be zealous again for Him and His purposes for them.
 - a. Even though the Jewish exiles and those who returned had been keeping the feasts, it had become a routine and requirement.
 - b. Furthermore, the reasons for fasting had changed. Instead of fasting for the purposes of recalibrating and reconnecting their hearts to God, and to recover their zeal for God and His purposes for Jerusalem, the Jewish people had begun to fast for their own deliverance from adverse situations.
2. God conveyed this message to Israel through four aspects (Zech. 7:1 – 8:23):
 - a. Rebuke (Zech. 7:1–7)
His call to Israel to awaken from her passivity and lukewarmness towards Him and towards the fullness of His purposes for her.

- b. Repentance (Zech. 7:8–14)
His call to Israel to repent from their lukewarmness and return to Him with all their heart, mind, soul and strength.
- c. Restoration (Zech. 8:1–17)
His promise that upon her repentance, He will restore her fully to all His promises, plans and the fullness that He has ordained for her. This restoration will be fulfilled to its fullness at the End of the Age and in the Millennial Kingdom upon the Second Coming of Jesus.
- d. Return (Zech. 8:18–23)
His promise to ultimately return to Israel, establish His throne in Jerusalem, and give Israel the privilege of partnering with Yeshua to rule and reign over all nations in the Millennial Kingdom. This is Israel's glorious and ultimate hope.

E. The Theme and Message through Zechariah 9 – 14

1. The last six chapters of the book of Zechariah provide a clear prophetic picture of what Israel will go through during the End Times before the Second Coming of Jesus. These chapters provide a view of the events that will unfold as we approach Jesus' return through the lens of the Jewish people and Jerusalem.
2. These chapters contain two sections comprised of two oracles that Scripture calls "*the burden of the Lord*" (Zech. 9:1, 12:1). Each oracle provides a different perspective of Israel's narrative at the End of the Age.
 - a. Zechariah 9 – 11 gives prophetic insight into how God will regather the Jewish people back to their land and how God will deliver Israel from all her enemies. He also warns her of the deception that she will face at the End of the Age.
 - b. Zechariah 12 – 14 reveals what Israel will encounter at the End of the Age. She will face great crisis and go through another Holocaust that will far surpass what she faced in World War II.
 - i. This crisis is sovereignly and divinely orchestrated by the Lord to refine, purify, and transform Israel (Zech. 13:7–9).
 - ii. God's purpose is to form her into a vessel that is worthy to partner Yeshua to rule and reign in the Millennial Kingdom. It is through this that Israel emerges as the "holy seed" (Isa. 6:13).

F. Conclusion

1. Knowledge of the book of Zechariah is necessary for us to understand God's zeal, heart and plan for the nation of Israel, especially as we near the End of the Age.

2. It gives us prophetic insight into how God will refine and restore Israel to the fullness of her destiny in Him as a holy nation.

3. As Gentile believers, we are to pray for and call the nation of Israel to repent and return to Yeshua her Messiah, so that she will step into the fullness of all that God has destined for her.