

Zechariah 8

Jerusalem—Future Center of Joyful Religion

In chapter 8 Zechariah shifts his focus away from the past failures of the people of Israel, and looks to the future Millennial Kingdom when Israel will experience unimaginable success, true prosperity, greatness, vibrant spiritual life, peace and much joy.

Since this chapter is a very brief glimpse into what life will be like for the Jewish people during the Millennial Kingdom, let's begin by briefly reminding ourselves of what the Millennial Kingdom is.

The Millennial Kingdom, or just, the Millennium, is a period of one thousand years, during which Jesus Christ will once again be physically present here on this earth, He will be ruling over the governments and people of the world as the supreme King.

His capital city, the center of His government, will be the city of Jerusalem—that is where He will have His throne.

Chronologically in future history, the Millennial Kingdom will begin immediately following the seven-year period of great trouble on earth known as the Tribulation.

During the Tribulation, a man known as the Antichrist, who will be supernaturally empowered by Satan to deceive the nations of the world, will seek, by deception and by brutal force, when necessary, to bring the whole world under his control, with one government, one religion, and with one economic system.

Jesus will take away those who are true followers of Him, delivering us from the wrath of His judgment, taking us into heaven while the Lord brings horrible judgment upon the unbelievers who remain upon the earth—both Jews and Gentile nations.

During this seven-year time of intense judgment against a stubbornly rebellious world, that is following a false Christ rather than Jesus Christ, the eyes of many from every nation on earth, will be opened to the truth and will put their faith in Jesus.

Many of them will be put to death for doing this, by the Antichrist, but the Lord will keep alive to the end of the Tribulation, a remnant from every nation.

Then at the end of the seven years of Tribulation, Jesus Christ will return to this earth, and we will return with Him. Jesus will remove from the earth, Satan, the Antichrist and all of the wicked who followed him.

Then Jesus will set up His Kingdom, with Jerusalem as His capital, and He will rule over all those from every nation who had put their faith in Him during the Tribulation, and we will rule together with Him over the earth.

During the thousand years that Jesus will rule over the earth, before He creates a new heaven and a new earth, He will be restoring this earth back to some semblance of its original perfection.

There will still be the presence of sin on the earth, because those who came through the Tribulation will not have received their glorified bodies, and they will be having children, who will be born with a sin nature, and they will have to put their faith in Christ.

But for the thousand years, Satan will not be present and there will be no demons allowed on earth during this time.

It will be a time of unbelievable goodness and near perfection for those whose hearts are loyal to the Lord during this time.

So let's see what Zechariah chapter eight has to say about this time, known as the Millennium.

Zechariah 8:1–2, "Again the word of the Lord of hosts came, saying, ²"Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; with great fervor I am zealous for her.'"

His passionate love for Zion is so strong that He has great wrath against any who mistreat and oppress Israel.

You are in a very dangerous position if you are an anti-Zionist, or anti-Semitic.

Zechariah 8:3, "Thus says the Lord: 'I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem...'"

Not only does God promise to once again restore blessing to the nation of Israel, but much more than that, He promises that His manifest/visible presence will return to Israel and He will make His home in Jerusalem.

So, this prophecy refers to Jesus' second coming when He sets up His throne in Jerusalem, lives in Jerusalem and rules the world from that city.

Zechariah 8:4–5, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. ⁵The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.'"

Here we are given some clues about what life in the Millennial Kingdom, will be like.

Some people will grow old. The Millennial Kingdom is not heaven, and it is not yet the new earth.

We who are part of the church will get our new bodies at the time of the rapture, which takes place before the Millennial Kingdom. So, we will not grow old.

But people who lived through the Tribulation, and entered into the Millennium with their natural bodies, will grow old in that kingdom, (many will reach a *great age*, like in the days of Genesis chapter 5, before the flood, when they lived to be up to more than 900 years old).

Isaiah the prophet described the city of Jerusalem in the Millennium this way, in ***Isaiah 65:20 NIV***, "*Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.*"

And some people, who have not yet received their glorified bodies, will still be getting married in the Kingdom and having children—lots of children.

Verse 5, "The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets."

Zechariah 8:7, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Behold, I will save My people [God will do it] from the land of the east and from the land of the west...'"

This means from all parts of the earth, from the rising of the sun in the east to the setting of the sun in the west, and every place in between God will save His chosen people (*David Baron, p. 238*).

Zechariah 8:8, "I will bring them back [God will do it], and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem...

Isaiah 11:11–12, "It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people ... the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."

This much of the prophecy has already begun to be fulfilled since 1948, but the last part of verse 8 will not come to pass until the second coming of Christ.

The conclusion of Zechariah 8:8 says, "***...They shall be My people and I will be their God, in truth and righteousness.***"

This describes the national conversion, in which, at the second coming of Christ, all of the surviving Jews will be saved and will follow the Lord their God (Romans 11:25-26).

It is important for us to look at what will happen to cause the Jewish people to suddenly turn to the Lord when Jesus comes back to the earth.

Ezekiel 36:22-32, “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “I do not do this for your sake [not because you deserve it], O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went...

²⁴ For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and [My Spirit within you will] cause you to walk in My statutes, and [because of My Spirit at work in you] you will keep My judgments and do them. ²⁸ Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; [because of all these things that I have done for you] you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

²⁹ I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses [The people of Israel couldn’t deliver themselves, so they lived under the curse of the law]. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you [this is undeserved blessing, a reward given to Israel for the work that God had done]. ³⁰ And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. [Not because Israel has deserved this, but because God has chosen to bless.]

³¹ Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight [meaning you will hate your flesh—referring to all those things you did independent of God], for your iniquities [intentional sin] and your abominations [disgusting and hateful behavior].

“³² Not for your sake [not because you deserve it] do I do this,” says the Lord GOD, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!”

Ever since the nation of Israel was formed in the wilderness, under the leadership of Moses, they have tried to be acceptable to God on the basis of their own good works.

The people of Israel, have lived under the curse of the law—a law that they could never keep.

Zechariah 8:11–12, “But now [speaking about the future Millennium, when the Lord returns to live among His people in Israel] I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,’ says the Lord of hosts.

In the Millennium God will not curse Israel for what they deserve, according to the law, but He will bless them for all that He has done in them. That is grace.

¹²“For the seed shall be prosperous, the vine shall give its fruit, the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew— I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these.”

Remember that Ezekiel 36:29-30 said, this is an undeserved blessing, a reward given to Israel for the work that God had done. That is grace.

Zechariah 8:13, “And it shall come to pass that just as you were a curse among the nations [because of your own ways when you lived independent of God], O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you [not because you deserve it, but by grace], and [because of my gift of grace and my Spirit living in you] you shall be a blessing [I will cause you to be what I want you to be]. Do not fear, let your hands be strong.”

In the past Israel has been a curse among the nations because of their rebellion against God.

However, the day is quickly coming when God will reverse the curse, save Israel by grace, and cause Israel to be a blessing among the nations. God will do it all.

Right now, and for all of their past history, God has been allowing Israel to demonstrate how well they can do living on their own.

Zechariah 8:14–15, "For thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Just as I determined to punish you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,' Says the Lord of hosts, 'And I would not relent, [just as God determined to punish Israel for their sin, He indeed has done, for thousands of years of Jewish history they have been cut off from God's blessing.] ¹⁵So again in these days I am determined to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear."

In the Millennium, God is determined NOT to treat Israel according to what they deserve anymore, but according to the undeserved good that He has planned for them, and that He will accomplish for them.

Notice the cause and effect at work here. Because God is determined to do good to the Jewish people (verse 15), He will cause them to live godly lives that are blessed (verses 16-17).

Zechariah 8:16–19, "These are the things you shall do: [God's grace will cause you to do these things, as He promised in *Ezekiel 36:27*, "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.]

[Because of My grace, you shall] **Speak each man the truth to his neighbor;** [You shall] **Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace;** ¹⁷[None of you shall] ... **think evil in your heart against your neighbor; And [you shall] not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate,' Says the Lord."**

Zechariah 8:18-19, "Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, ¹⁹"Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be joy and gladness and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah. Therefore love truth and peace.'"

The Israelites established several fasts during their Babylonian captivity. Each of these fasts was to grieve and mourn a major tragic event in the life of the nation. Each of these tragic events were the result of the sin of the people and involved the loss of many lives that were taken by God in judgment for their sin.

For many centuries the Jewish people have remembered these times of crisis, and have fasted and mourned because of the terrible loss and failure.

Now here is a profound truth that we will never understand until that day comes: the Bible tells us that these very events, that for centuries before Christ's return have been legitimate reasons to fast and mourn, after, when Jesus, returns and establishes His Kingdom here on earth, these same events will rightly become occasions for joy and gladness and cheerful feasts.

Many people have asked, "When we are done this life, and we are together with Jesus, will we feel sorrow and regret when we remember the tragic events of this life, and the big mistakes that we made, and the lost loved ones who won't be with us or with the Lord?"

In that day, when we see things from God's perspective, and understand how He was causing all things in this life, to work together for our good, there will be no fasting and no mourning, but those very events that were once causes for sorrow now, will become occasions for joy and gladness and cheerful feasts.

Mark 2:19, "And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast."

In Revelation 7:17, speaking of those who died during the tribulation, the Bible says that, "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Being with Jesus will change our perspective on everything. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

2Corinthians 4:17, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory..."

And some of the effects of that glory, is that, one day, the very things that make us cry today, will be the things that cause us to rejoice with gladness and celebrate with feasting.

Not that we will ever rejoice over sin, but that we will rejoice when we see how God was working through even our worst sins to accomplish His glorious purposes.

Perhaps the closest example to illustrate this truth that we can begin to understand today, is how we are able to rejoice and celebrate in the crucifixion of Jesus once our eyes have been opened to see how God used that horrible event to accomplish so much good.

Zechariah 8:20–22, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Peoples shall yet come, inhabitants of many cities; ²¹The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Let us continue to go and pray before the Lord, and seek the Lord of hosts. I myself will go also." ²²Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.'"

Already today, many Christians make pilgrimages from all over the world to Israel, to see the places where Jesus once walked.

But in the Millennium, masses of people, those who came through the Tribulation, and their children, who do not yet have their glorified bodies, will make pilgrimages to Jerusalem to see Jesus, in person, face to face, and the Bible says they will, *pray before the Lord*—that means they will talk with Him.

We who are part of the raptured church, will have a different, and much closer relationship with Jesus than this, but I'm not sure what it will be like.

Zechariah 8:23, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'"

Because King Jesus is living in Jerusalem, among the Jewish people, God's blessing upon the Jewish people will be so rich during the Millennial Kingdom that the Gentiles from every language and every nation will want to associate themselves with the Jewish people.

Only in the Millennial Kingdom will we see the full implications of the glorious hope and promise contained in the Name, "Immanuel" which means God with us.

The Millennial Kingdom is the time when God's promise to Abraham shall come to its ultimate fulfillment:

Genesis 12:3, "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

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