Clips from Psalms
Psalms 105:39-41
Jehovah's Wonderful Works in Behalf of Israel

"The Lord spread a cloud for a covering over the Hebrews and gave them fire for a light in the night. They asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. He opened the rock, and waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river."

Floral Heights Church of Christ
1814 Buchanan, Wichita Falls, Texas 76309
WWW.floralheightschurchofchrist.org

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Floral Heights Church of Christ
1814 Buchanan
Wichita Falls, Texas 76309
(940) 322-1650

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Elders
Mike Chancellor
(322-6374)
Tom Witherspoon
(923-6479)

Deacons
Joe Cronin
Jim Hall

Preacher
John Robertson

ZECHARIAH

God brought sword, pestilence, famine, and wild beast to Judah due to her rebellious ways yet she refused to lay these things to heart (Isaiah 42:25). Jeremiah told the rebellious house of Judah that she would go into Babylonian captivity for seventy years so that she may be corrected and punished for her persistent sin (Jeremiah 25:11; 30:12 and 31:17-20). During these seventy years they were to experience the chastening of the Lord (Jeremiah 30:23-24).

They would come to be "ashamed" of their rebellious ways (Jeremiah 31:19). Their shame would lead them to "repent" and call upon the Lord in prayer and praise (Jeremiah 31:19). The Lord promised the captives that after seventy years were accomplished in Babylon he would bring them back to Jerusalem (see Jeremiah 29:10). Though the days of captivity were very unpleasant there were greater days to look forward to (Isaiah 44:1-8). God would bring his people back to Judah and they would be restored. Isaiah writes, "That said of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying of Jerusalem, she shall be built; and of the temple, your foundations shall be laid" (Isaiah 44:28).

The book of Ezra confirms the validity of God's promise to restore his people to their land (see 2 Chronicles 36:19-21 and Ezra 3:1-19). The captives that initially return with Zerubbabel were fully restored and they understood their divine mission to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the temple (see Ezekiel 36:32-36). Their hearts were purposed to do all that God had commanded them (see Ezra 3:2-4). The Lord had commanded them to build the temple and so they were eager to do his divine will (see Ezra 6:14). Two years after coming to Jerusalem they began work on the temple and laid the foundation (Ezra 3:8-10). When the people saw the foundation of the temple many wept due to the size compared to Solomon's temple (see Ezra 3:12).

The Jews were nonetheless excited about the temple of God. When the Samaritans came to offer help Zerubbabel rejected them as those who have no part in spiritual matters with the people of God (Ezra 4:1-3). The Samaritans did all within their power to frustrate and discourage God's people from building the temple seeing that they were not permitted to be involved in it (Ezra 4:4ff). The Samaritans "weakened the hands of the people of Judah" and "frustrated their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign..."
Welcome to all Our Visitors. It is our prayer that you will be edified by our worship service today. If you have any questions regarding what we teach or practice please be our friend and talk with us.

Prisoner Studies: Continue to pray for the twenty men that are incarcerated throughout the state of Texas that John is studying with.

Gospel Meeting: Jerry Fite of Pasadena Texas will be preaching at the Westside church of Christ in Fort Worth Texas. Please see the bulletin board for details.

Shut ins
Stella Davidson
696-1030
Darlene York
692-0489

_The fool has said in his heart that there is no God_ Psalms 53:1

of Darius king of Persia” (Ezra 4:4-5, 24). The next fifteen years would go by without any work being done on the temple as God had commanded (Ezra 4:24 and Haggai 1:15). The book of Ezra tells us that God sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to the people to motivate them to get back to working on the temple (Ezra 5:1-2; Zechariah 6:15 and 8:9). The people had not worked on the temple for fifteen years (see Haggai 1:1 and Zechariah 1:1 as compared to Ezra 3:4 and 4:24). Though God had commanded them to build the temple they permitted persecution, in the form of discouragement by the Samaritans, to stop working on the temple. Furthermore they had lost sight of spiritual thinking and living as Zechariah reveals. Haggai’s duty was to cause the Jews to “consider their ways” (Haggai 1:7). God had plagued the people of Judah with a drought and they were not even considering the cause of their discomfort (see Haggai 1:8-11). Haggai’s words were received and the people obeyed God and went back to work (Haggai 1:12, 14).

Zechariah tells us that even after the people are motivated by Haggai to build they continued to experience drought and a lack of God’s blessings. Two months after they had returned to the work on the temple Zechariah is still calling for their repentance of wicked works (compare Haggai 1:15 to Zechariah 1:1ff). Zechariah is pleading with them to “return now from your evil ways” (Zechariah 1:4) which he latter identifies as their “wickedness” (Zechariah 5:5-7). The people’s “wickedness” came in the form of thievery and false witnessing (Zechariah 5:3-4), mundane, mechanical, ritualistic or habitual religious practices (Zechariah 7:1-7), and having a passion to acquire the riches and fame offered by the world (Zechariah 9:1ff). God reveals that their hearts were as hard as an “adamant stone” (Zechariah 7:12). The people devised evil against their own brethren (Zechariah 7:8ff) and they were “unclean” (Haggai 2:14). They had also lost sight of the spiritual significance of the temple by viewing it as small (Zechariah 4:9-10). The people of God had fallen back to the ways that caused them to go into captivity in the first place (see Zechariah 11:4-6 and Amos 2:6 and 8:4-6). The objective of the drought was to drive the people to repentance yet rather than turning to God they turned to idols (see Zechariah 10:1-2). The message to the people was that if they wanted God’s blessings they would have to not only build the temple but speak truth, execute truthful judgment, leave off evil devising, turn away from false oaths, and stop doing all the things that Jehovah hates (Zechariah 8:16-18). Total reformation was the only acceptable way to God.

Zechariah delivers eight divine visions and two oracles to the people. The object of the visions and oracles is to turn the people’s hearts back to God. The people were to learn that God’s blessings are contingent upon man’s obedience from the heart (Zechariah 8:9-13). Zechariah takes his audience down a future road of a day and time when the Branch or Messiah would reign as king supreme over God’s kingdom (Zechariah 3:6-8 and 9:9). This King shall provide a “fountain” (Zechariah 13:1) from his “pierced” body (Zechariah 12:10) that God’s people may be cleansed of their sins (Zechariah 13:1). These “living waters” (Zechariah 14:8) shall ever be supplied by the “King over all the earth” (Zechariah 14:9). Those who obey God will not experience his divine curse (Zechariah 14:11). The Lord will protect, defend, and be a wall of protection for his true saints in Zion (see Zechariah 2:5; 9:8, and 15).

Application of the Book of Zechariah

There are at least twenty cross references between Zechariah and Revelation. These references explain God’s dealings in the lives of men even today. There is a great warfare taking place between the forces of evil and good. Satan’s objective is to wash away the world in a flood of ungodliness by means of worldliness, temptation, persecution, and false teachers (see Zechariah 3:1-4 compared Revelation 12:13-17). During the days of Zerubbabel, Haggai, and Zechariah God’s people were persecuted by the Samaritans (Ezra 4:1ff), tempted by the ways of the world (Zechariah 9:1ff), and lead in erroneous directions by false prophets (Zechariah 10:1ff). They had failed at keeping their original purpose to obey all that God had commanded them (see Ezra 3:1-4). God’s people today often have desire to live righteously; however, the cares of the world, persecution, and false teaching are strong to pull us from our initial Christian objective. If not careful the Christian, like the Galatians, can fall from grace (see Galatians 5:4).

God is the Lord of love and mercy. The Lord is not willing that any should perish in their sins (2 Peter 3:9). The Lord has his divine ways to move sinful men to repentance. During the days of Zerubbabel, Haggai, and Zechariah God brought a plague of drought upon the people to cause them to turn back to him in obedience (Haggai 1:7-11 and Zechariah 8:9-13). Zechariah reveals to the people that this is God’s modus operandi when man sins. God brings curses in the form of plagues to motivate people to repent (see Zechariah 5:1-4; Deuteronomy 28:58-63; 29:20, 22-25; Revelation 15:8; 16:9-11 and 22:3). The message of the prophet is that God’s blessings are contingent upon man’s obedience. The prophet solidifies this idea with the use of the word “rain” at Zechariah 14:17. Those who obey God will worship him in hope of receiving the fountain (Zechariah 13:1) of living waters (Zechariah 14:8) that cleanses man of sins (Zechariah 13:1). The blessing of forgiveness is compared to the blessings of rain. When the people’s hearts were right and they built the temple out of a spirit of faith then the rains would return (Zechariah 10:1). Likewise, today, when man obeys from a heart of faith they will receive God’s blessing of the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:3-7). Such a blessing can scarcely be overlooked by man. We need the forgiveness of sins far more than rain, food, lodging, money, entertainment, and emotional well being. No possible price can be placed upon the forgiveness of sins. Zechariah teaches us the value of God’s blessings and the mode in which I am to obtain them. God wants us to obey him out of a love of heart and spirit of gratefulness. We too ought to build out of a spirit of obedience; however, let us never forget that if our actions of obedience are not motivated by faith and gratefulness then God does not accept it (Zechariah 7:11-14).

Zechariah spends a considerable amount of space identifying the kingdom of God and its inhabitants after his eight visions (chapters 8-14). Zechariah identifies the future kingdom of God as the Lord’s church in the same manner as Ezekiel in his final nine chapters. The language is prophetically veiled yet with context and cross references at our side we see the truth. Zechariah’s objective is to isolate the saints of God from the world not only on paper but in application within each person’s life (see Zechariah 9:1-9). We must all conform our lives to the image of Jesus Christ in obedience else be faced with an eternity of punishment in hell (Revelation 20:10-15). God, through Zechariah, is reminding his people of his ways and how he achieves his will in the lives of men. Those who are humble and obedient will have no curse to move them to repentance but they will rather be in God’s kingdom, protected, and defended from the flood of Satan’s wickedness (Isaiah 28:17; Matthew 24:39; Luke 6:48 and Revelation 12:13-17).

John G. Robertson