

# ZECHARIAH: RETURN

## MOTIVATION!

READ: ZECHARIAH 7:1-7 (Quotes from AV/KJV)

I first met my wife Cathy at a summer camp in Michigan when I was 17 years old, the oldest of the four Rendel missionary kids. My mother came to us one day and told us our church in Milan, Michigan was paying our way to camp because we were missionary kids. Three of us were brothers and loved building and flying model airplanes. We told mom we did not want to go. However, she kept coming back to us and insisting that it would not look very good if we refused the wonderful offer the church was making.

We finally gave in and went. We haggled a bit about how many weeks we would have to be there. The camp was run for 3 weeks at a state park near Chelsea just off I-94, not far from Jackson. It was the project of 5 Baptist churches in the Detroit area. The little kids went the first week but they needed big brothers and sisters. The older kids could get in on the first 2 weeks overseeing a cabin and a table in the dining room. The third week was for the big kids. So I went as a big brother.

When we arrived at the camp I strolled around and as I passed the kitchen I looked into see the most awesome girl I had ever met! Well it hardly needs to be said that I stayed all 3 weeks at camp. She was there for 3 weeks and I would be there for 3 weeks, too! I was motivated!

I'd like to talk to you about motivation, about what should motivate us.

Let's look at these verses in Zechariah. Verse 1.

***1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius,***

1) The Jews were now living under the Persian kings. Their own Israelite kings had disobeyed and rebelled against God. He removed them from their thrones and made them subjects of the Babylonians, in the famous deportation to Babylon, the Babylonian Captivity. Eventually the Medes and Persians conquered the Babylonians, so now the Jews were under them.

2) The present events we are reading about in Zechariah took place after 70 years of captivity. Cyrus, the Persian king who conquered Babylon, had invited the Jews to return to Jerusalem and build God's temple. The story of this great event is found in the first chapters of Ezra. They began to rebuild God's house.

3) However, their enemies, the nations that lived around the Jews in Canaan, had discouraged them by their threats and they left off building the temple for 16 years. I wonder if any of us have been threatened, or felt threatened lately? Due to fear or some other cause have we left off building God's house?

The second part of verse 1 says,

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*[that] the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth [day] of the ninth month, [even] in Chisleu;*

- 1) God raised up Haggai and Zechariah, the prophets, to encourage the people to continue the building of the temple. (Ezra 5:1)
- 2) Their preaching was successful and the leaders and people took up their tools to continue building. (Ezra 5:2)
- 3) Let's remember that their preaching was not simply to get the Jews to build a physical building but to build a spiritual people as well. Their return to Palestine from Babylon was to be a spiritual return and not simply a physical move of some hundreds of miles (kilometres).
- 4) When we attend church it is a physical attendance. But it should be more than that. Are we going with a full and enthusiastic knowledge that the physical displacement from our home to our local church is also a spiritual pilgrimage?

Now verse 2.

***2 When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezzer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD,***

- 1) Apparently some of the people (The NIV says “of Bethel”, which may have to do with confusion over “house of God”, Bethel meaning the house of God.) were stirred up to think about spiritual matters and came to pray to the Lord and bring Him a certain request.
- 2) How thrilling to know we have someone to whom we can turn in prayer. When the sailors in Jonah’s ship insisted that each call on his gods or god in that terrible storm Jonah was not among them. But they did find him and when he explained who his god was, the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land they were terrified. Their gods were regional deities. This was the supreme God! (Jonah 1: 9, 10) And he saved both them and Jonah.
- 3) But today we pray in the name of Jesus. He told us to. Up to now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive that your joy may be full! This Jesus was the one who not only made us and all on earth and in the heavens, but the one who died to take away our sins and secure for us the forgiveness of God!

Verse 3 says,

***3 [And] to speak unto the priests which [were] in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?***

- 1) Here was their request, or question. Should they continue to fast and mourn in memory of their sufferings? Verse 5 mentions that they were fasting.

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2) They had suffered famine in the sieges, slavery, death, and humiliation. In memory of these terrible national disasters they were mourning and fasting.

3) We do things to remember. There are statues around Moscow, Mexico City, Washington DC, London, Buenos Aires, Lagos, Mumbai, Paris, Istanbul and other cities which remind us of those fallen in the wars of our countries. The Jews, however, could not set up statues in Babylon because they were slaves and servants, but they could mourn and fast, so they did.

*Let's take verses 4 and 5 together,*

***4 Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying,  
5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh [month], even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, [even] to me?***

1) The Lord responded. Isn't that good! God answers. In Judges 1:1-3 after the death of Joshua Israel asks the Lord who should go up before them against the Canaanites and God said, "Judah shall go up first." He answered them. It is wonderful to have a God who answers prayer.

2) However, in this case, He did not respond with a yes or no. Yes, continue mourning and fasting; no, don't do it.

3) God answered with another question: Did you do it for me? Did you fast for me? Were these disasters that came on you, simply national events in your calendar, or were they spiritual disasters, disasters that had to do with your relationship to me?

4) The Lord is asking them about their motivation. The Lord goes deeper into their spiritual lives, and our spiritual lives than we would look ourselves!

Now verse 6,

***6 And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat [for yourselves], and drink [for yourselves]?***

1) The Lord goes further so that the message is clear. He speaks of feasting as well as fasting. In other words, he rounds out the question implying that all things, not just a few limited things, should be done for Him.

2) All of life is to be lived for Him. In fact this can be applied more widely, reminding us that both the negative and positive things are to be done for Him.

3) Cathy's experience on the ship LOGOS with the office and the cleaning helped me understand our struggles. Cathy was office manager. There were areas that needed cleaning on LOGOS and she was assigned the cleaning of a few of them. She preferred the office work over cleaning. We learn to do both for the Lord. Some would rather

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clean than work in an office, they also learn to do both tasks for the Lord. We are not to look down on any work. It is to be done for the Lord. Just think of how the Lord cleaned (cleansed) us of our sins. While on earth he cleansed the leper. The Lord knows a lot about cleaning.

4) In our home we all have jobs we prefer above other jobs. I think I'm safe to say that Caroly prefers vacuuming over doing the dishes. I prefer the dishes over vacuuming. Now there's a fit! Cathy prefers ironing and sewing over cooking. Yet she has made us thousands and thousands of meals over the years.

5) I would prefer preaching over administration. Others would prefer cleaning over preaching. On one of the outreaches we had in Mexico we had 500 people join from Canada, Mexico, the USA and several other countries. We were operating out of a church that sat about 400 people but the bathrooms could not handle the all day traffic from all these people. They bogged down and flooded. The normal cleaning rota was not handling the job. I could see what was coming. There was nothing for me to do but grab mop, bucket, cleanser, and rags and dive into a clean up operation. I was one of the preachers but I realized people might not listen to much preaching if they were worried about the mess in the bathrooms.

I had to just go for it and do it as unto the Lord.

Finally verse 7,

***7 [Should ye] not [hear] the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when [men] inhabited the south and the plain?***

1) God reminds his people of the past, times of prosperity and protection. He did such things for Israel and infers that he can do them again. They are to trust him.

2) Let me assure you that I am not preaching prosperity, at least not material prosperity. In our case the emphasis should be on spiritual prosperity. If we have seen God bless us in the past, then he can do it again, as we make him our highest motivation.

3) And if our motivation is wrong do we give up our ministry, that to which God has called us? No! We repent and return to the Lord. In Zechariah 1:3 the Lord spoke to Israel these words, "Return to me and I will return to you." They were to return to the Lord right where they were and the Lord would return to them! They were to return to building the temple, God's house, but with the Lord as their highest motivation!

4) We are also building God's house, God's spiritual house. Let us return to him as our highest motivation. Paul wrote to the Philippians that some preached Christ out of envy and strife thinking to add to Paul's sufferings. What an awful reason to be in Christian ministry! Let us return the Lord to his rightful place, on the throne of our lives and our ministries. Let him be our ultimate motivation!

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5) Someone has said that altitude is attitude! I think they were referring to basketball. There is no one higher than Jesus. Let him put altitude in your attitude.

6) Many of you have served the Lord from the heart right in your town and in your church. You have spent many hours and days cleaning, preparing food, preparing Sunday school lessons, working with different age groups, counting money, organizing meetings, youth outings, witnessing, praying, encouraging others, covering expenses, fellowshipping, listening, decorating, and so many other things. Keep up the good work and keep up your motivation. Put your eyes on the Lord.

Romans 14:7-8 say:

*7 For none of us liveth(s) to himself, and no man dieth(s) to himself.*

*8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

Jack Rendel

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