

# Zechariah 1

## The Book Of Zechariah And Today's Church - Zechariah's Mission

Frequently we hear the statement that we the New Testament and no longer under the old law. This is true. Today we are under the words of Jesus and we are no longer under the words of the Law of Moses, or the Old Testament in any way. But that does not mean that there are not some valuable things that we can learn from the teachings of the Old Testament. The same God we serve today, was the God of the Jews in the days before the Christian era. What we have got to remember is that God never changes. That which God says is good and moral is always good and moral. He gave us the laws of the Old Testament, not because they were His next best idea after the Patriarchal laws proved themselves unacceptable, but because they were the next step in the plan, teaching us many essential things. So, in God's plan, according to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 1, and Galatians 3, everything was focused all along on the coming of the Messiah.

What was necessary to get everyone to this point was all God designed, God directed and God encased. It was God's plan.

One of the sections of that plan was to show the Jewish people, and the rest of the world, that God means what He says. If we will follow God and God's way, we are okay with God, no matter what happens in the world around us. If we do not follow God's way, then punishment will come at some point. It may come before the end of the world, and it may come on the actual day of judgement, but come it will.

In the case of the Jews, the day of judgement came first through the hand of the Assyrians taking the northern tribes away into captivity. Later, it came when God sent the Babylonians to take the tribes of the south into captivity. No one should have surprised with this, for it was the cycle of events that defined the whole book of Judges: man sins, God sends punishment, the people learn a lesson, God sends relief, and then it all starts over again.

This time, the Jews were serving under the Persian Empire, which had over thrown the Babylonians. Under men such as Ezra and Nehemiah, the people began to come home to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and to rebuild the temple.

This was a very daunting task, to say the least. They literally had to work with a brick trowel in one hand and a spear in the other. It was trying times, with trying adversaries to oppose them, to heckle them, and very hard work to tire them. What was needed was a man to come and to give the people those little things that would bolster them and help them as they sought to plant the flag of the Lord again in Judea. It is in the psychology of Zechariah's work that we find some of the tools that we will need as we seek to plant churches today. It was a major teaching book of the first century church for this very reason and it can still help us today.

### I. Zechariah's Mission

The book of Zechariah is not one of those Old Testament books that every one reads repeatedly, and that is to the loss of those who have not sat down and given it a good solid read and thought. It is filled with things that can help us make it through the storms of this day, or of the morrow.

First, we need to understand that Zechariah is part of the great return to Palestine, following the days of exile in Babylon and Persia. He served under the leadership of men such as Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerrubabel. He is a contemporary with another prophet named Haggai who was also part of the great return from exile in Babylon and Persia to Palestine. He too wrote on of the books of the Old Testament. Their job was to help the children of Israel to stay closely allied to God, focused on meeting the challenge of returning to Jerusalem and rebuilding the city and the temple. There was not a little task at all.

When such an awesome task, like rebuilding a city, is undertaken it can be a bit daunting on the workmen until we realize that if it is requested by, and under the guidance of, Jehovah, it will succeed. There is no question about the outcome of such a project, if God is for it, and we are committed to it. This is a message that we all must adopt when we start out to build a congregation.

What happens, though, if those around us keep on coming up with all of the assorted “why we will not succeed”? Well, I recommend that we stop and remember, just as in the book of Job, that well meaning people who operate primarily off of the base of their own knowledge will never be up to reach up to the level of God and give us good advice. They may very well see why we should fail. But, if God, the all powerful one wants it to happen, it will happen, and no force on heaven or earth will be able to stop it from happening. The building of a congregation demands a strong concept of an active and all powerful master builder.

Look at Gideon, and his measly 300 men fighting the Midianite horde of 120,000 men. It should be a “no contest” in favour of the Midianites, 300 versus 120,000. But who won? Who would have thought that an army of 300 die-hards, armed with candles, pitchers, and trumpets, attacking in the middle of the night, would have prevailed?

Look at David versus Goliath and remember which one fell and which one should have fallen, according to the sages of conventional wisdom. Look at the deeds of all of the fathers and see the great victories that have been accomplished by the men and women of faith and ‘perspicacity’, who in spite of the odds and difficulties ahead of themselves, prevailed because they walked with God.

“Perspicacity” is the talent for hanging in there when it all seems too hard and when we do not even see the end, yet. The perspicacity of the faithful servant is the lifestyle of that person who goes out to serve even though the greatest of odds are stacked against them. When we loose the ability to see the victory we are weak and we will probably fall, but when we see the conclusion, before the conclusion is reached, we will keep on struggling and suffering and going on forward. That is the way of real strength and real victory for God. We must remember that God, the almighty, the all loving, all wise, all seeing Lord is standing beside us. We must not loose sight of God. If we continually return to Him, we will have the victory we seek.

This is a problem in the church, today, however. In many ways, we have the same problem that the returnees faced. We can very easily loose sight of the God above us and get stuck with just the rituals that we have learned from our grandparents. It is a bit like the couple that know what they want to do for a vacation, and yet we get caught up in reading of all the options of what they can do on that vacation. After looking at 2000 options and ideas, they take a rest from contemplating them all and just never get back to work, and never take that vacation. The rituals that have no meaning are in need of being opened and exposed to the children of the new generation so that we will have the craftsman to go out and rebuild the church, once again.

To encourage one another to follow God in all of this need for building, it begins with our understanding that the victory is already won with God in command, for He will not be defeated and He will not be deterred. Zechariah’s mission, like our mission, is to keep reminding everyone of the majesty, power and vision of our Lord, God. He is the Lord, after all: never take that lightly. He is not a weak and uncaring, apathetic God who sits on a cloud somewhere eating grapes. He is not one that we have to awaken to achieve any goals at all. His power is not diminished, in any iota, after having created and then raised Jesus from the grave, nor is his eye clouded. He is still active, still seeing, still reaching out to all of the peoples of this world. He is still the supreme power, still the same infinite knowledge bank that He has always been. He is still our father, more importantly. He is still the one that is capable of turning any thing into good, for those that “love” Him.

So then, as we go to the wall for this day’s work, take courage, go back to the wall, this day with God in your hearts and minds. If nothing more, seek to lay just one brick a day, for God. A life time with that kind of work ethic will see the city rise out of its ashes and apathy, to become the mighty fortress that it was intended to be.

This is the mission then of Zechariah, to get the builders out building those walls and the temple’s awesome edifice. It is an act of motivation that we need, as well as a God of power and wisdom and protection beside us.