**The Year Ahead: Don’t Get Caught With Your Eyes Down** John E Brown

Zechariah 8:1-23 January 20, 2019

* We have been looking at ways to ‘enter’ and approach the New Year from a biblical point of view. Today we will see what we can glean from Zechariah chapter 8. This chapter has only 23 verses yet we find the phrase “Thus says the Lord” 7 time; perhaps we can get an idea of His heart for His people that will equip us for the year ahead. (He speaks specifically in verses 2,3,4,5,6,7,9 and 14)
* When God works, everything works, like it should. Zech 8:1-3.
  + “Then the word of the Lord of Hosts came, saying, “Thus says the Lord of Hosts, ‘I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.’” **Zech 8:1-3 NASB**
  + “I am zealous for Zion – I care I am angry about Zion - I am involved!” **Zech 8:2-3 MSG**
  + The Lord promises a ‘visitation’ and a ‘habitation’ of His people and their place. (Zech 8:3)
    - His ‘increased presence’ causes His people and place to have a new name…’Truth City (the Message) Faithful City (NLT) City of Truth (NASB)
    - His mountain… The mountain of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies… Will be called the Holy Mountain. (see verse 3 NLT)
    - Truth, reality, authenticity and Holiness are the descriptions God gives to His people one He comes to them.
    - Not everything is ‘new’ somethings are restored.
  + “Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age. And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.’” **Zech 8:4-5 NASB**
  + “Old men and Old women will come back to Jerusalem, sit on benches the streets and spin tales, move around safely with their canes – a good city to grow old in. And boys and girls will fill the public parks, laughing and playing – a good city to grow up in.” **Zech 8:4-5 MSG**
    - This speaks of peace, family, generational blessing and favor.
* “Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘If it is too difficult in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days will it also be too difficult in My sight?’ declares the Lord of hosts.” **Zech 8:6 NASB**
* “This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says: All this may seem impossible to you now, a small remnant of God’s people. But is it impossible for me? Says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.” **Zech 8:6 NLT**
* “Do the problems of returning and rebuilding by just a few survivors seem too much? But is anything too much for me? Not if I have my say.” **Zech 8:6 MSG**
* “But He said, “The things that are impossible with people are possible with God.” **Luke 18:27 NASB**
* “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” **Ephesians 3:20-21 NASB**
  + Is something this ‘good’ too difficult in the ‘sight’ of my people, the Lord asks??
  + ‘Don’t get caught with your eyes down!!”
  + Remember, God is zealous and jealous over His people and His manifest presence changes everything.
* “Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; and I will bring them back and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.’ “Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Let your hands be strong, you who are listening in these days to these words from the mouth of the prophets, those who spoke in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid, to the end that the temple might be built. For before those days there was no wage for man or any wage for animal; and for him who went out or came in there was no peace because of his enemies, and I set all men one against another. But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,’ declares the Lord of hosts. ‘For there will be peace for the seed: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce and the heaven will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things. It will come about that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you that you may become a blessing. Do not fear; let your hands be strong.’ “For thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘ Just as I purposed to do harm to you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘ and I have not relented, so I have again purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear!” **Zech 8:7-15 NASB**
  + This is wonderful! God says in verse 7, I am going to save My people from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and you can fill in the blank. (verse 7)
  + He speaks of the release of captives and a return to their place of purpose and fulfillment.
  + He promises to dwell among His people… in the midst of them and He will faithfully be their God and they will genuinely be His people. (verse 8)
  + God’s people were in a ‘rebuilding phase’ and it was not all that easy for them. They hear the words of the prophets concerning the ‘glory’ of the temple being rebuilt but the work was not completed yet.
  + The Lord encourages them and tells them that He is ‘in’ this process and that He is going to change things, by His powerful presence and involvement.
* “For I am planting seeds of peace and prosperity among you. The grapevines will be heavy with fruit. The earth will produce its crops, and the heaven will release the dew. Ones more I will cause the remnant of Judah and Israel to inherit these blessings. Among the other nations, Judah and Israel became symbols of a cursed nation. But no longer! Now I will rescue you and make you both a symbol and a source of blessing. So don’t be afraid. Be strong, and get on with rebuilding the Temple! “For this is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says: I was determined to punish you when your ancestors angered me, and I did not change my mind, says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. But now I am determined to bless Jerusalem and the people of Judah. So don’t be afraid.” **Zech 8:12-15 NLT**
  + Here is a Big Help… Never lose sight of the ‘out come’ by getting stuck in the ‘how come?’
  + The Lord tells them ‘Don’t fear, don’t be afraid.’
  + Don’t be afraid that it won’t happen or that you will ‘miss it…’
  + Don’t fear, just because it hasn’t all happened yet (The Temple was in ‘process’ but was not rebuilt yet)
  + Don’t fear, but do strengthen your hands… ‘harden your hands’ and remember God has promised and purposed to do good to His people (verse 12-14)
  + I think we ‘strengthen our hands, we harden our hands’ in prayer so we continue being convinced and our hearts don’t harden while waiting on Him.
* The Lord tells His people, do not fear but do these things:
  + “These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgement for peace in your gates. Also let none of you devise evil in your heart against another, and do not love perjury; for all these are what I hate,’ declares the Lord.” Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, says, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth months will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah; so love truth and peace.’ “Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘it will yet be that peoples will come, even the inhabitants of many cities. The inhabitants of one will go to another, saying, “Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I will also go.” So many peoples and might nations will come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord.’ Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘In those days ten men from all nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”’” **Zech 8:16-23 NASB**
    - Speak the truth to each other (verse 16)
    - Speak truth that produces righteousness and justice among you.
    - No room to be a ‘hater’, a schemer, or a reviler.
    - Love that God loves and agree with His words and ways.
    - Recognize that things happen when there is a time of ‘visitation’ from God… He changes the ‘fasts’ to feasts of joyous, cheerful gladness… So love truth and peace. (verse 19) (Truth and peace… that’s Harmony!)
    - Fasts becoming feasts is no doubt God putting His ‘touch’ on His people.
    - People will see God’s favor… His ‘evidential presence’ on His people and they will say… “Let us go with you for we have heard that God is with you.” (verse2 3)
* God tells His people that He will ‘increase’ His noticeable involvement and show His favor and blessing to them in measurable fashion… Increase, fruitfulness and peace.
* I love the promise in Zech 8:12.
  + The Lord says…”I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things…”
  + When He works their everything just works better! Don’t get caught with your eyes down!
* My Story
  + I was ‘caught’ in a chilling storm that the Lord used to ‘drive home’ the ‘exponential increase’ that He promises to His people in Zechariah Chapter 8. It was a very cold -2 and I thought I could still do something outside. I did not factor in the wind… I had done lots of ‘outdoor’ work in the cold weather so I was not concerned. Well, the wind increased to over 30 MPH, making the wind chill temperature -47. Wow! This is what I ‘heard’ that day… God’s presence, his ‘wind’ produces ‘exponential’ increase. The atmospheric conditions, what people felt and experienced and how people were impacted increased by more than 23 X in magnitude (-2 vs. -47) When the winds came. So breathe on us breath of God!