

Lamar E. Cooper, Sr.  
Interim President  
Criswell College

## The Character of the King and His Coming Kingdom Zechariah 8:1-23

### Introduction

The conditions that will prevail during the millennial kingdom are carefully presented with vivid detail. There are at 20 characteristics which the Lord revealed to Zechariah concerning the millennial kingdom. Certainly these revelations would have been a source of great comfort to the exiles returning from Babylon. But their impact is such that they are a source of comfort and hope to all the people of God of all ages who eagerly await His return. Note the following twenty characteristics of the millennial kingdom that are superimposed over the elements of Jerusalem, the Holy City of the future, here in chapter 8:1-23:

- (1) The Coming Kingdom will be established by divine purpose and protected by divine will, 8:1-2. The frequent use of the phrase, ten times in chapter 8, "Thus says the Lord of hosts," is a clear indication that the matter of the future glory of Jerusalem is one of primary concern to the Lord. The message concerning the character of the kingdom is a direct divine revelation clearly indicating that these are not Zechariah's thoughts and ideas. The repeated use of "Thus says the Lord of Hosts," shows that the prophet clearly wants no mistake to be made concerning the source of these revelations. Also, the frequent use of the divine name, *Yahweh*, established the determination and enthusiasm which God has to insure the fulfillment of the promises made to Israel.

The use of the emphatic in the phrase, "I am zealous for Zion with great zeal," v. 2, is further evidence of the intensity of God's commitment. The same phrase was used by the prophet in 1:14 just before the initial revelation of God's determination to return personally to Jerusalem and to restore the city. Here in 8:2, there is the addition of the phrase "and with great fervor or furor 'heat' I am zealous." The Hebrew presents emphatically the strong resolve of the Lord to reestablish His kingdom in Jerusalem.

- (2) The Lord will return to personally dwell in Mt. Zion, 8:3. The Lord came personally and visibly to dwell among the people when the Tabernacle was completed and the glory of the Lord appeared, Exod 40:34. The glory of the Lord also came to the Temple which Solomon built, 1 Kgs 8:10, 11. This, too, was a sign of God's favor at the dedication of the structure that was built to

His glory. While we nowhere are told that such a sign occurred at the time of the completion of the second Temple of Zerubbabel, we know that the glory of God was manifested in it through the coming of Christ (Luke 2:8-11; John 1:14; 14:9-10). Jesus went into that Temple which Herod enlarged, and worshipped there (Luke 2:41-52) so that the glory of the Lord was present, if only for a short time in veiled form. Zechariah foresaw a time when the Lord will once again dwell personally and visibly in the Temple of the millennial kingdom (cf. Isa 40:3; 61:8a; Jer 31:34; Mic 4:7).

- (3) The Lord will dwell permanently in Mt. Zion, 8:3. The glory of the Lord departed in the vision of Ezekiel, Ezek 9:3; 10:4, 18; 11:22-23, and it also departed when Jesus ascended to the Father. Zechariah foresaw a time when the Lord will again dwell in Mt. Zion permanently. That this is to be a final and permanent residence is confirmed in two ways. First, the context implies a permanent return to dwell forever with His people. Second, the use of the Hebrew *shaken*, "to dwell," has to do with a permanent residence of the Lord. Other of the prophets also had insights into this time when the Lord would come to dwell with His people "forever," see Isa 9:7; 40:3; Mic 4:7.
- (4) Jerusalem shall be known as the seat of truth, 8:3. Because God is there personally to give counsel and true judgment, men will come to the light of the Lord's truth, Isa 9:2. Isaiah saw seven spirits of the Lord. Seven is the number of completeness and thus implies full holiness and truth, which he identified as the sevenfold spirit of wisdom, spirit of understanding, spirit of counsel, spirit of might, spirit of knowledge, spirit of fear of God, and the Spirit of the Lord. Thus, the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth, Isa 11:9, coming out of Jerusalem as the Spirit of truth. The presence of the glorified Christ will also make available to all men the way, the truth, and the life, John 14:6.
- (5) Jerusalem shall be known as the Lord's holy mountain, 8:3. Just as the city shall radiate the truth of the Lord, it will also reflect the holiness of His character, so it will be called "the mountain of holiness." This phrase was used by Jeremiah in 31:23 where he predicts the revival of the use of the Hebrew language in the "mountain of holiness." Isaiah also used the phrase in 48:1-2; 52:1, where Jerusalem is described as the holy city because it is His city. He who is holy shall dwell there and make it holy by His presence, Rev 21:27; 22:14-15.
- (6) Longevity shall be greatly increased, 8:4. Men and women who live in the city shall have extended lifespan and advanced years. Health conditions will be so

improved that sickness will be nonexistent, Jer 33:6. Those who have infirmities and handicaps will be restored and healed, Isa 29:18; 35:5-6.

If one were to die at 100 years of age that one would die still being an infant, Isa 65:20. As a result of the marvelous health of the people, there will be a renewed vigor and strength for all who live in the millennial kingdom, Isa 40:31.

- (7) Children will be born and shall play safely in the streets, 8:5. Children will continue to be born during the time of the millennium and will come into the world through painless childbirth. They will play in safety and security in the streets of Jerusalem, Isa 11:6-9, which is in bold contrast to present conditions in Israel where children live in fear due to terrorism and the constant threat of terrorism and war.
- (8) Divine power will fulfill all of God's promises, 8:6. No one will be able to deny the fact that God is at work in the millennial kingdom. The promises of God will all become a reality, Obad v. 17, and he will preserve every stipulation of His covenant to Israel, Isa 49:8. These promises will be fulfilled by the power of the Lord in Christ, 2 Cor 1:20, and backed by the very Word of God, Heb 6:12-20.
- (9) The complete regathering of Israel will be accomplished, 8:7. The restoration at the time of the exile was only a partial one. Those who came from Babylon came from only one direction and one nation. While there are Jews from many countries in Israel today, not all the Jews have returned. The millennium will be a time when all the Jews will return to the land, coming from every corner of the world and from among many nations (cf. Isa 11:11-12; 43:1-6; 49:12; 60:1-2; 62:10-11; Jer. 31:1-8, 10; 32:36-37).
- (10) The covenant will be renewed with Israel, 8:8. When Israel comes to Jerusalem, where the Lord dwells personally, they will enjoy the blessed privileges of the covenant once again, see Exod 19:1-8. It is for this reason that the sacrifices of the covenant will then be reinstated. (This matter was discussed more fully in the discussion of Zechariah 6:14-15). The sacrifices will once again be offered in the Temple, but this time in daily commemoration of the perfect sacrifice, the Messiah who is the Lord Jesus Christ. The covenant itself will be a new, internal covenant that was described by Jeremiah, Jer 31:31-40, in a manner that clearly has millennial overtones.
- (11) The millennial temple will be built by Messiah, 8:9. The Messiah will personally attend to the building of the Temple in the time of the

millennium; see previous notes on 6:12-13. The immediate fulfillment of this prophecy was the construction of the second temple by Zerubbabel but the entire passage has a much more distant and complete fulfillment. The prophet foresees a structure which the Messiah, Himself, shall build—a prophecy that will await its fulfillment until the dawn of the millennial kingdom.

- (12) The millennium will be a time of full employment, 8:10-11. Israel will serve as the priests to the nations and finally become what God had ordained them to be when the covenant was first initiated, which was a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, Exod 19:5-6; Isa 61:6a. The nations shall assist and support Israel in her role, Isa 61:6b, and shall be their servants, Isa 61:5, and all men will work and enjoy the fruits of their labor, Isa 65:21-22. There will be no taxes to pay, no bureaucracy, no government finances. Even the weak will prosper and flourish, Isa 60:22, and one of the dreams of our time will be realized with full employment in the coming kingdom of our Lord.
- (13) The millennium will be a time of unprecedented prosperity, 8:12. One of humanities dreams has been that of a society where his work would produce personal prosperity. For most people today, their work produces prosperity for others while they are only able to carve out a modest existence. The millennium, however, presents a future time when work will yield true personal prosperity, Isa 60:22, and all people shall eat of the abundant increase of the land, Isa 62:8-9. At that time there will be a great resurgence in agricultural productivity. Amos 9:11-15 pictures this as a day that will be so productive that the plowman will overtake the reaper. The plowman will go out to prepare the soil for planting only to find that the reapers are still harvesting the abundant produce of the previous crop, Amos 9:13. This same prosperous climate will pervade all trades, jobs, and areas of work.
- (14) The curse of Israel shall be removed, 8:13. The Lord had promised to bless Israel by means of the covenant stipulations, but the covenant was conditional and based on the obedient response of the people, Exod 19:5. In great detail the Lord revealed to them the blessings that would be theirs in the land of promise if they were obedient, Deut 11:8-25. But God also warned them that if they accepted the covenant and then were disobedient, they would be under a curse, Deut 11:26-32.

Provisions were made for a yearly ceremony to remind them of this very fact. It was enacted on Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal in Samaria. The people were instructed to gather in two groups; one group on Mt. Gerizim who would recite all the blessings of the Lord that could be obtained for those who were

obedient and the other group on Mt. Ebal who would recite all the curses that would befall the disobedient, Deut 27-28. Israel's disobedience had finally led them to captivity in Babylon, and it was clear that they were under the curse. They longed for the day when the curse would be removed.

Another aspect of the removal of the curse may be seen in the promise to Abraham that his descendents would be a blessing to all nations, Gen. 12:1-3. When they were disobedient and under the curse, they could not be a blessing to others. They were, therefore, not only under the curse of the Lord, but they were a curse to the nations as well. It is this curse that the prophet sees removed and the blessings of the covenant restored so that Israel might once again be a blessing.

(15) The Lord proposes "to do well" unto Jerusalem, 8:14-15.

This is the positive side of the removal of the curse. The phrase "to do good" is the Hebrew *tov*. The phrase literally means the Lord wills "to cause good things to happen," meaning all that the Lord promises. This is the Romans 8:28 of the Old Testament, and it includes all that is pleasant, desirable, beautiful, cheerful, prosperous, and happy. This "good" is all of the best things which God so much wants to give His people and promises to include in the millennial kingdom.

(16) Truth, justice, and equity will prevail in the millennium, 8:16. One of the areas of serious guilt for the nation prior to the exile was social injustices. Civil justice was dispensed in the gate of the city, and it was common for most city plans to include several rooms in the gate towers which were the town council chambers. There the city elders would meet and hear cases and dispense justice as a civil court (Deut 21:19; Ruth 4:1-12; Isa 29:21). Amos was a champion of social justice who decried the injustice and bribery that was taking place "in the gate" (Amos 5:10, 12, 15). The coming perfect kingdom will feature the reign of truth, justice, and peace, qualities which will provide the proper foundation for a stable and godly society. "Truth" is the Hebrew, *'emet*, meaning "firmness" and "stability" and "durability." Right judgments will be the order of the day as true justice, *mishpat*, or equity prevails. The end result is true *shalom* or peace, which is not just the absence of conflict but also implies "security" and "wholeness."

(17) True neighborliness will prevail, 8:17. This concept goes a giant step beyond the qualities of truth, justice, and peace, and promises that true neighborliness will prevail. The citizens of the kingdom will only want to do, to be, and to think of those things that will benefit and bless others. All gossip,

backbiting, slander, and deceit, all the evil imaginations of the heart, will be a thing of the past.

This addresses the sin of failing to love one's neighbor at its very source, which is in the mind. Jesus effectively addressed this problem in the Sermon on the Mount when He observed that it was not enough just to say you had never murdered anyone. One must come to deal with the attitude and motive from which murder comes (Matt 5:21-26), namely hatred and contempt. Jesus also condemned adultery at its source, the lust of the human heart (Matt 5:27-30). This characteristic of the Coming Kingdom means that no one will devise evil against his neighbor.

- (18) Fasts will be turned into feasts, 8:18-19. The fasts of Israel were characterized by two elements; first, abstinence from food and second, solemn reflection and personal contrition before the Lord. Fasts were regularly held four times a year in the fourth month, the fifth month, the seventh month, and the tenth month, 7:3; 8:19. In addition to those regularly scheduled days of fasting, a fast could be proclaimed anytime there was a serious personal or national crisis, or natural disaster (e.g. 1 Sam 31:11-13; Esth 4:1ff; Dan 6:18-20). Zechariah foresaw a day in the coming kingdom when all fasting will give way to feasting and rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord, Jer 31:10-14. This is a time when there will be no serious personal or national crises and no natural disasters to warrant such a time of humiliation and contrition.
- (19) All nations will eagerly come to seek the Lord, 8:20-22. There is no hint in the Old Testament that would suggest the prophets ever foresaw the salvation of the Gentiles through the ministry of the New Testament church, Eph 3:1-6. However, they did foresee a time when all nations would come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord. Isaiah speaks of the Gentiles seeking the "root of Jesse," Isa 11:10, and the nations coming to the "light" of the Lord, Isa 60:1, 3. Those Gentiles who come to the Lord will seek to restore the land of Israel, Isa 49:22, and serve the people of Israel, Isa 49:23, and bring their produce to help re-establish the people of the Lord in the land, Isa 60:5-9. As a result of the return of the Lord's people to the land and the rebuilding of the temple, many nations shall come there to worship and serve the Lord, Mic 4:2.
- (20) The Jews will enjoy universal favor, 8:23. In those days ten men shall take hold of the skirt of a Jew because it will be apparent that the Lord is with them. The use of ten here is figurative and represents a universal desire and is also a symbolic number representing all mankind. While there have been

times when anti-Semitism ran rampant in the world, the day is coming when the Jew will be admired, respected, and sought after.

### Conclusion

The positive side of the question concerning fasting and compassionate concern is a thrilling one. For the present, God requires sincere compassion and sincere fasting, but for the future, God wants all men to know that the coming kingdom will present the complete fulfillment of the desire of all men for a right relationship with the Lord. God will set up that kingdom with its perfect King under whose rule peace, righteousness, justice, and equity shall be the order of the day. Men shall no longer desire to know the Lord, for all men shall know Him personally, Jer 31:34. Fasting will be turned into feasting and compassionate loving concern for others will be the normal pattern of life.

### Lessons in 8:1-23

- (1) God has a great zeal to protect, defend, and restore His people, 8:1-2.
- (2) God will one day return to a place of permanent abode in Mt. Zion, 8:3.
- (3) In the day of God's return, Jerusalem will be exalted as the "city of truth," "the Mountain of the Lord," and "the Holy Mountain, 8:3.
- (4) God has planned the perfect society where peace, health, and well being will result in longevity and contentment, 8:4-5.
- (5) If we long for such a marvelous national life, how much more does God long for the day when by His power He shall bring forth His glorious kingdom, 8:6.
- (6) God will save Israel and return them to the land of promise, 8:7-8.
- (7) God will build a temple in which people of all nations may come and worship Him, 8:9.
- (8) All men shall find employment in the coming kingdom, 8:10-11.
- (9) The coming kingdom will be a time of unprecedented prosperity, 8:12.
- (10) The curse of Israel shall be removed in the day that the Lord forgives their sin and heals their land, 8:13.
- (11) God will bless and do "well" to Israel, 8:14-15.
- (12) The kingdom shall be characterized by justice, truth, and peace, 8:16.
- (13) There will be a spirit of love for one's neighbor throughout the coming kingdom that reflects divine benevolence, 8:17.
- (14) Fasting shall no longer be necessary and all the fasts shall be turned into feasts, 8:18-19.
- (15) Many nations shall come by divine invitation to worship and serve the Lord in Jerusalem, 8:20-23.
- (16) Jews will enjoy universal admiration and favor and all nations will desire to follow them to Jerusalem, 8:23.

- (17) The character of the coming kingdom will reflect the character of the coming King in a twenty-fold revelation of the wonders of Jerusalem as the crown jewel of the millennial reign of the Messiah, 8:1-23.