

# “Jehovah Was Sore Displeased With Our Fathers”

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## INTRODUCTION

A. Our lesson text is taken from the **Zechariah 1:2-6**

(1) In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to

Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,

(2) The LORD has been very angry with your fathers.

(3) Therefore say to them, Thus says the LORD of hosts: Return to Me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.

(4) Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying, Thus says the LORD of hosts: Turn now from your evil ways and your evil deeds. But they did not hear nor heed Me, says the LORD.

(5) Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?

(6) Yet surely My words and My statutes, Which I commanded My servants the prophets, Did they not overtake your fathers?"

## BACKGROUND

A. The Book of Zechariah is

1. The 38<sup>th</sup> book in the Bible, 38<sup>th</sup> book in the Old Testament.
2. The 16<sup>th</sup> of 17 books of prophecy.
3. The 11<sup>th</sup> of 12 Minor Prophets books.
4. It bears the name of its author. Zechariah was a popular name shared by no less than twenty-nine Old Testament characters.

B. Like his predecessors, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Zechariah was of priestly lineage as the son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo.

1. According to Zechariah 2:4, Zechariah was called to prophesy at an early age in 520 B.C.
2. He was born in Babylon and brought to Palestine by his father when the Jewish exiles returned under Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, the first of three returns, this one occurring in 536 B.C. The second return would be led by Ezra some eighty years later, and the third return under the leadership of Nehemiah some 12 years after the second.
3. Among the prophets, he was a younger contemporary of Haggai.
4. According to statements made by our Lord in **Matthew 23:35**, Zechariah was "murdered between the temple and the altar" in the same way that an earlier Zechariah (son of Jehoiada) was martyred according to 2 Chronicles 24:20-21.

- C. The Book of Zechariah relates historically to the rebuilding of the temple and the reestablishment of the temple service.
1. Construction on the second temple was begun in 536 B.C. but discontinued two years later in 534 B.C.
  2. The work was resumed fourteen years later in 520 B.C. and completed six years thereafter in 514 B.C.
  3. The rebuilding of the temple involved six years of actual work done over a twenty-year period.
  4. Such would be a reminder that Israel no longer had its own king.
    - a. Sin and rebellion against God accompanied with a non-repentant attitude had brought that about.
    - b. Sin changes things . . .
      1. Sin changes circumstances . . .
      2. Sin changes the present . . .
      3. Sin changes the future . . .
      4. Sin changes directions . . .
      5. Sin changes history.
- D. Zechariah uses a series of eight visions (1-6), four messages (7-8), and two burdens (9-14) to portray God's future plans for His covenant people.
1. The first eight chapters of Zechariah were written to encourage the remnant while they were rebuilding the temple.
  2. The last six chapters of the book were written after the completion of the temple to anticipate Israel's coming Messiah.
- E. The opening message of Zechariah appears to have come between Haggai's 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> message, between verses 9 and 10 of Haggai 2, when work on the Temple was a little over a month along. Its apparent insignificance was disheartening many of the people. It is in this context that Zechariah warns against their evident rising tendency to return to the ways of their disobedient fathers, whose failures before God had brought them to their present pitiful condition.

### **A GREAT QUESTION TO CONSIDER**

- A. In writing to the brethren in Rome, Paul said: "Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).
- B. This same principle is referenced in 1 Corinthians 10:6 when Paul wrote, "Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted."
- C. Great lessons are to be learned from Old Testament events.
  1. God is God . . .
  2. Man is man . . .
  3. Sin is sin . . .

4. Obedience is obedience . . .
  5. Disobedience is disobedience . . .
  6. Faithfulness is faithfulness . . .
  7. Unfaithfulness is still unfaithfulness.
- D. A good question to ask when studying from the Old Testament is this: **“What can I learn from this passage (or story) that will make me a better Christian this side of the cross?”**
- E. With that question firmly in our minds, let us examine Zechariah 1:2-6.

**ZECHARIAH 1:2 – “The LORD has been very angry with your fathers.”**

A. Verse two begins the message that God is sending to the people through Zechariah.

1. The King James renders the passage, “The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers.”
  2. Please observe that the Lord was not just “displeased,” but rather that He was “sore displeased.” He was displeased with displeasure with their fathers.
  3. He was displeased with their sins of:
    1. Ingratitude
    2. Idolatry
    3. Iniquity
    4. Rebellion in general.
  4. The judgments of God upon those who had gone before these ex-exiles should have served as a warning for the present audience not to tread in their steps.
  5. In so doing God calls them to repentance. Repentance can turn a curse into a blessing.
- B. They were home physically . . . but were they home spiritually?
1. Now that they had returned from exile some 900 miles away, it was time to return to God.
  2. While God had helped them in the return from exile, their return to Him would have to be their decision.
  3. Already there were indications that when it came to the things of God that their priorities were being misplaced.
  4. Strong beginnings do not always assure strong endings.
    - a. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the first group of exiles had arrived in 536.
    - b. In that same year the work of rebuilding the house of God (the Temple) began.
    - c. Two years into the project, the work stopped, and for the next 14 years the Temple remained in a state of inactivity and disrepair.

- d. While the people neglected God, they were not neglecting themselves and their physical needs and wants.
  - e. They were repeating many of the same mistakes that their forefathers had made. That is apparent in our text.
5. The Bible records many occasions when people should have remembered but didn't.
- a. In **Joshua 24:24**, the people said, "The Lord God we will serve, and His voice we will obey."
  - b. Two biblical chapters later we read in **Judges 2:10** – "When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel."
  - c. The last verse in that book says, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (**Judges 21:25**).
  - d. Jeremiah was led to write "Has a nation changed its gods, which are not gods? But my people have changed their Glory for what does not profit" (**Jeremiah 2:11**).
- C. Jeremiah was a heartbroken prophet with a heartbreaking message.
1. He labored for more than forty years
  2. Proclaiming a message of doom to the stiff-necked people of Judah.
  3. He calls for Judah's repentance before it is too late.
  4. Whereas the northern kingdom of Israel had been destroyed by Assyria in 722 B.C. and the southern kingdom of Judah has continued for another 117 years after that before being conquered and taken into Babylonian captivity beginning in 605 B.C., the people of the south had every opportunity to learn from the mistakes of their brethren in the north.
  5. Instead, prophet after prophet faithfully tried to summon their repentance for a longsuffering God, only to see Jerusalem captured, plundered, destroyed, and its leaders killed and the captives taken to Babylon.
  6. God raised up Ezekiel and Daniel to minister to give hope to the people in Babylon. God wanted the people to repent of their wickedness. In fact . . .
    - a. When Assyria began to rise to the status of a world power (about 900 B.C.), God sent Elijah and Elisha to help Israel.
    - b. When God began to "cut off" Israel (**2 Kings 10:32**), God sent Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah to reveal His will among the people.
    - c. After the Assyrian captivity of Israel, and the northern kingdom was no more, ten tribes were gone, God sent forth Zephaniah, Nahum, and Jeremiah in order to keep Judah from continuing to follow in the steps of Israel.
    - d. After Assyria fell in 607 B.C. and Babylon began to rise in its place, God sent Habakkuk and Obadiah to summon Judah to faithfulness.

- e. Even after Judah fell to the Babylonians, God raised up Daniel and Ezekiel to provide hope for Judah's deliverance and restoration once the seventy-year period of captivity ended.
  - f. After the fall of Babylon in October, 539 B.C., and the rise of Persia in its place, God raised up Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi to help the people not return to the mistakes of the past.
- D. While God truly cared for His people, He knew that their history had been one of forgetting His goodness to them.
1. While God had a future for His people the bridge from where they were to where they needed to be was called faithfulness.
  2. No wonder God was "sore displeased" with their fathers . . . their fathers knew better but had failed to do better. **James 4:17** – "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.
  3. What a powerful lesson for God's people today!
    - a. Because the Lord was very angry concerning the fathers, those then living needed to repent with sincerity of heart.
    - b. The nation had experienced the severe anger of God at the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 B.C. at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army.
    - c. Those events were too fresh in their history to be forgotten.
    - d. Like them, let us not forget the great deliverance God has provided through the precious blood of Jesus Christ.
    - e. Let us not forget the bondage that sin held for its captives, and let us not forget the glorious freedom and spiritual blessings that are provided to us in Christ.

**ZECHARIAH 1:3 - Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Return to Me," says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts.**

- A. The then present was beginning to resemble the past that led God to be "sore displeased."
1. While the people had completed the first of what would be three returns over a total of some ninety-two years, returning to Jerusalem did not insure that they would return to God.
  2. In Egypt Abraham's descendents had become enamored with the things of the Egyptians.
  3. No doubt, to some extent, that would have been true for those in Babylon and Persia as well.
  4. Failure to remember good things may allow the memory of bad things to appear appealing.
  5. In emphatic language, Zechariah declares God's displeasure with the fathers of their countrymen.

- a. It is more than their neglect of the building of the Temple that distressed Him; it was their general spiritual outlook.
- b. Return from exile alone was not enough to please the Lord; they needed a heart return to the Lord.
- c. Their repentance would find God ready and willing to receive and bless.
- d. God had done so much . . . it was now time for them to do their part.

**ZECHARIAH 1:4 - Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Turn now from your evil ways and your evil deeds." ' But they did not hear nor heed Me,' says the LORD."**

- A. To "not be like your fathers" was to not make the mistakes they made . . . mistakes so grievous that God could not allow them to continue polluting His chosen people.
  1. This verse references a statement made by Isaiah as recorded in **Isaiah 31:6** - "Return to Him against whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted".
  2. We read in **2 Chronicles 36:15-17** – "And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. (16) But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy. (17) Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave them all into his hand."
- B. What were their "fathers" doing? "Moreover all the leaders of the priests and the people transgressed more and more, according to all the abominations of the nations, and defiled the house of the LORD which He had consecrated in Jerusalem." (**2 Chronicles 36:14**).
- C. The Bible reveals a hard truth ". . . But they did not hear nor heed me."

**ZECHARIAH 1:5 - Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?**

- A. What were the effects of the word, which God spoke to them by his prophets?
  1. The preachers died. . . and the hearers died . . . but the word of God died not.
  2. It never has and it never will!
- B. Israel has been destroyed and ruined in the bloody wars with the Assyrians; and Judah, in those with the Chaldeans.

1. They also, who spoke unto their fathers, were dead. Nonetheless, their predictions remained; and the events, which had taken place according to those predictions, proved that God had sent them.

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**ZECHARIAH 1:6 - Yet surely My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they returned and said: Just as the LORD of hosts determined to do to us, according to our ways and according to our deeds, so He has dealt with us.**

- A. Man is mortal, but God's words and statutes are undying.
- B. Though the former generation was gone, subsequent events revealed the truth of the message of God in the judgments that befell Israel for disobedience.
- C. God fulfilled every prediction to the letter. Zechariah's contemporaries needed to learn the lessons of history, and decide to obey God implicitly.

**CONCLUSION:****A. LESSONS & OBSERVATIONS FROM ZECHARIAH 1:1-6**

1. Sin serves as a reminder that both its lessons and its consequences are not limited to one generation.
  2. The people of this generation may be new . . . but their sins aren't.
  3. Question: "Is God displeased with your life, or is He "sore displeased? with it?" The answer depends upon your faithfulness or lack thereof.
  4. The judgments of the past should be a warning for the present . . . and for the future.
  5. Repentance is a prerequisite for pleasing God.
  6. Physically you are here, but where are you spiritually?
  7. Being in a church service does not guarantee worship.
  8. The failure to remember the failures of the past may be to invite them to return again.
  9. The power of a faithful earthen vessel that contains a spiritual message. The prophets into which the messages of God were put have gone the way of all the earth in death. Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 4:7** – "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."
    - a. The treasure is put into earthen vessels . . . the water of life into earthen pitchers, often cracked, and brought home broken at last.
    - b. While the vessel may die, the treasure will live on.
  10. The failure of a few may pollute the faithfulness of many.
- B. May we study . . . may we learn . . . may we remember . . . and may we obey.
- C. God's Plan for Man's Salvation.