

Call for Repentance

Key Verse: “*Say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.*”
—**Zechariah 1:3**

Selected Scripture:
Zechariah 1:1-6;
7:8-14

AS ONE OF GOD’S HOLY prophets, Zechariah repeatedly spoke of Israel’s need to manifest genuine repentance in order to enjoy the blessings promised under the Abrahamic Covenant. The burden of his heart was that his people, now under Gentile domination, should return to God and pledge allegiance to his righteous statutes.—Zech. 1:1,2

Our Key Verse contains a merciful expression that God is long-suffering, and desires to bless Israel abundantly if they would seek and obey him. Zechariah also reminds Israel that their fathers had rejected the warnings of former prophets who pleaded with them to renounce their wicked ways. “Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD. But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.”—vss. 4,6

The Book of Zechariah contains historical accounts of God's past dealings with Israel. Additionally, it is prophetic in that it addresses future events related to that nation, as well as messianic in that it portrays conditions in the earth when the New Covenant will be in operation under Christ's righteous rule. All devoted Christians, therefore, should seek to study and apply lessons that will enable them to develop the character required of those who will be a part of the body of Christ. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."—Rom. 15:4

God's use of human agencies to provide instruction to his covenanted people should be heeded. Before Christ's First Advent, the prophets were sent to guide the people of Israel. During this Gospel Age, Christians can discern God's will by obeying the teachings found throughout the entire Bible, and noting in particular the words of Jesus and the apostles. The principles behind many of Zechariah's admonitions apply equally to God's Old Testament people as well as the followers of Christ.—Zech. 7:9,10

The hardness of heart by Israel led to their rejection of Christ as their Messiah during the time of his First Advent. Additionally, they have suffered since that time as they have been scattered as a people throughout the world. (Zech. 7:14) Now that they have been regathered to their national homeland, other scriptural promises for their return to God's favor await fulfillment.—Isa. 35:10

The Heavenly Father has arranged, through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, to eradicate sin in repentant believers during this Gospel Age and also for the world of mankind during Christ's kingdom. "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."—I John 2:2 ■