

Promised Blessings

Key Verses: *“These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.”*
—*Zechariah 8:16,17*

Selected Scripture:
Zechariah 8:1-17

Others, who remained in exile under the favorable rule of Cyrus, were asked to support the effort by giving articles of silver and gold, goods, livestock, gifts and freewill offerings to those who had volunteered to return.—Ezra 1:3-6

The rebuilding of the Temple began with its foundation, and the completion of this phase was a major

THE OCCASION OF ZECHARIAH’S prophecy was at the time of the rebuilding of Israel’s Temple in Jerusalem. Under the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, Jews previously in Babylonian captivity were encouraged to return to Jerusalem to engage in the rebuilding work. (II Chron. 36:22,23; Ezra 1:1-4) Isaiah had prophesied hundreds of years earlier about Cyrus and even referred to him by name.—Isa. 45:1,13

God not only prepared the heart of Cyrus, but he also stirred up the Israelites, many of whom favorably responded to be part of the first wave of returning exiles. Those whose hearts were thus moved prepared themselves for the journey back to Jerusa-

accomplishment towards the goal of completing the work. “When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel and with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.” (Ezra 3:10) This initial joy and zeal, however, was soon replaced with a period of slackness, as the opposition of their enemies caused the Jews to forget God’s promise that he would be with them. As a result, the work ceased for a time.—Ezra 4:1-24

It was here that God reminded Israel of his love for them by sending two prophets to encourage them to redouble their zeal in serving him. The first message came from the Prophet Haggai in the form of encouragement to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah: “Be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; ... be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts: According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.”—Hag. 2:4,5

The second message came through Zechariah. He reminded the Israelites that they were not to expect prosperity at that time, but rather should obediently complete the rebuilding work. If they would faithfully complete the Temple’s construction, promised blessings would follow in God’s due time.—Zech. 8:9-16

While both Haggai and Zechariah spoke to natural Israel, there is also an application to spiritual Israel. Speaking of the greater temple of God, the Apostle Peter says, “You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up ... sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (I Pet. 2:5, *New American Standard Bible*) The command of our Key Verse, “These are the things that ye shall do,” is a reminder to all of us to fulfill our covenant of consecration with God faithfully, even unto death.—Rev. 2:10 ■