

Comfortable in Captivity

Zechariah 2:6-9

Introduction

1. Though they had dwelt for 400 years in the land of Egypt awaiting the promises of God, the hearts of Israel soon turned back to captivity after God redeemed them.
2. After the passing of the rebellious generation, Moses described the blessings which awaited the children of Israel in the promised land, and warned them against making the same mistakes – **Deuteronomy 6:10-12**
3. While God promised blessings in the land He gave them, He also warned of curses if they turned to serve other gods – **Deuteronomy 28:36-37** – captivity.
4. Though Israel would do what God warned against, and receive the curses God revealed, God gave them hope – **Deuteronomy 30:1-3** – return from captivity.
5. Israel rebelled against God and Assyria carried them off into captivity. Judah rebelled against God and Babylon carried them off into captivity and razed the land and temple.
6. Jeremiah prophesied of 70 years of captivity, and wrote to the captives that their hope would be realized, but until then they had to live in captivity – **Jeremiah 29:4-14**
 - a. **(vv. 5-9)** – they were to wait out their time and live.
 - b. **(vv. 10-14)** – they were not to forget their hope in God, and they were to long for the day of return.
7. Cyrus, king of Persia, made a proclamation according to God's promise to Israel that the captives could return, and rebuild – **Ezra 1:2-4**
 - a. **"Who is among you of all His people?" (Ezra 1:3)** – A question of identity.
 - b. Yet, those who returned were relatively few – **Ezra 2:64-65**
 - c. Cyrus' proclamation was in 536 B.C., and those who returned laid the foundation of the temple.
8. The first part of Zechariah's prophecy began in 520 B.C., where God gave him visions and messages speaking of God's faithfulness, and promise of rebuilding, restoration, and renewal. He called the people to repentance, full return, and hope.
9. After a vision where God speaks of Jerusalem being inhabited by multitudes, and Himself being their wall of fire for protection, He addresses His people who remained in Babylon despite the faithful opportunity He had given them to return – **Zechariah 2:6-9**
 - a. Though God had promised their return and had delivered on His promise giving them opportunity through Cyrus' proclamation, many remained in Babylon!
 - i. Had they forgotten their identity? Had they forgotten their purpose? Had they forgotten their God? Had they forgotten their homeland?
 - b. The message of Zechariah's prophecy seems to indicate a complacency and comfort in their captivity.

- i. Stockholm syndrome – describes a psychological phenomenon where a captive or victim of abuse develops a bond with, or positive feelings for their captor or abuser which prevents them from leaving.
 - ii. Had Israel gotten so comfortable in Babylon that she forgot they were the enemy?
- 10. This part of Israel's history acts as a cautionary tale for us today. Are you remaining in captivity despite God's provision for redemption? Have you turned back to captivity after redemption and grown comfortable there again? Though a part of God's redeemed, being in the foreign land of a world captive to sin, are you becoming comfortable and complacent in this current state?
- 11. We must get up and flee from Babylon!
- I. Comfortable in Captivity
 - A. Acclimation
 - a. Ancient military tactics of conquest were brutal and unrelenting. The siege of a city, followed by the parade of captives back to foreign lands was filled with degradation and shame.
 - i. Reaching the foreign land of Babylon after the horrors of war, the captives would have undergone severe culture shock in addition to the other severities awaiting them.
 - ii. However, time becomes a powerful agent of Satan who uses it to cause God's people to become acclimated to a hostile environment.
 - b. Acclimation to the sinful world of captivity is an incredible danger!
 - c. **1 John 2:15-17** – do not love the world!
 - d. **James 4:4-5** – friendship with the world is enmity with God!
 - B. Amnesia
 - a. 70 years is a long time, and it would take teaching, remembrance, prayer and meditation to keep the proper mindset as an Israelite in captivity.
 - i. It may have been that many simply forgot.
 - ii. Forgetfulness comes in many forms. Intellectually they may have recalled their identity and vocation, but the calling had been lost to them.
 - b. We must not forget who we are created to be – **Genesis 1:26** – there is more to your purpose than living for the things of the world.
 - i. Christ restores us to this purpose – **2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10**
 - c. **2 Peter 1:8-9; 3:18** – we must not forget our rescue, cleansing, and given purpose in Christ! We must seek to be like Him!

C. Apathy

- a. Given enough time people tend to not care anymore. This is a product of the former two.
 - i. It may be that some of the Israelites had become acclimated to the land of captivity, had forgotten who they were and what their future promised, and had become apathetic about it all.
 - ii. It may be that, in contrast to the original entrance into the land of promise, they knew the return would be hard – already built vs. rebuilding – so they were simply apathetic about a project that would require so much of them.
- b. One thing we can never do is grow apathetic about our spiritual purpose in Christ, and the hope He gave us!
- c. **Titus 2:11-14** – we are to be zealous! God’s grace rescued us from captivity and calls us to live above the filth of sin in the eternal purpose of Christ – this is underway now, and we look for the day of consummation!
- d. **Galatians 6:8-10** – our current labor is substantive and meaningful, and will lead to blessed reward.

II. Cause to Come Forth

- A. God’s call to Israel through Zechariah’s prophecy gives good reason for them to get up and flee from the land of captivity – **“Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north” (Zechariah 2:6, KJV).**
- B. Felling
 - a. **Isaiah 10:33-34** – Isaiah’s prophecy of Assyria’s judgment is described as the felling of a forest by God.
 - b. He promised the same through Zechariah, and warned the people to get up and leave before it happened – **Zechariah 2:6-9**
 - i. God will judge, and we must separate ourselves from those opposed to Him lest be we destroyed along with them!
- C. Fellowship
 - a. Zechariah’s prophecy continues and turns to the faithful who had returned. They still awaited the fulfillment of God’s promises in their fullness, and God assures them of His faithfulness – **Zechariah 2:10-13**
 - b. Ultimately, the text speaks of the Messianic kingdom, and full spiritual redemption and restoration. GOD HAS PROVIDED FOR FELLOWSHIP WITH HIS PEOPLE, BUT THIS IS IN A RETURN TO HIM!

Conclusion

1. We live in a land of captivity and must not grow comfortable!
2. We must flee from the world to our God who is gracious and loving!