

A CALL TO REPENTANCE

--ZECHARIAH 1:1-6--

INTRODUCTION:

God sent Zechariah to proclaim that Yahweh remembered His covenant to Israel and would fulfill it through the Messiah; because of this, the returnees were to be faithful to God by continuing to rebuild the temple as a part of God's testimony and witness to the world. The prophecy begins with a call to repentance; this had to be the starting point if the people of Israel were to fulfill what God had called them to do. Genuine repentance, consisting of a radical change of heart and mind, is a gift of God's mercy and grace. It includes an immediate change of affection, causing the heart to turn away from sin and idolatry and to turn toward the living and true God. It is to cry to the Lord for mercy asking Him to receive the change of heart that only He can provide. This call to repent is how this book begins.

I. RETURN TO ME (Zechariah 1:1-3)

- a. Zechariah opens his book and introduces his prophecy by giving us a very specific _____.
- b. The remnant that had returned from exile was at first enthusiastic to _____ Jerusalem and the temple and to repopulate the city.
- c. God first sent _____ to minister to the people, and he gave four short messages that challenged, exhorted, and encouraged the people to act on God's will.
- d. Then God raised up _____ to reiterate the message the people had heard from Haggai.
- e. Though it was a message of _____ and encouragement, Zechariah's prophecy began with a sobering reminder for the people.
- f. This call to _____ was evidence of the Lord's goodness and remembrance toward His people, indicating His gracious desire to save and bless them.
- g. In this time of fear and discouragement, Zechariah's opening verses reminded the people that the Lord had not _____ them.

II. LEARN FROM THE PAST (Zechariah 1:4-6)

- a. God continued His call to _____ by not only telling them what true repentance is, but also what it is not.
- b. The former generation was warned but Zechariah reminds his generation that they did not _____, nor did they heed the command to turn from their evil ways and their evil deeds.
- c. To impress upon the people the importance and the urgency with which they needed to respond, the prophet again pointed to the past with two rhetorical _____. (Ezra 9:7)
- d. The first, "*Your _____, where are they?*" (Zechariah 1:5a, NASB95)
- e. The second question, "*And the _____, do they live forever?*" (Zechariah 1:5b, NASB95)
- f. In contrast with man's fallenness and frailty, God reminded His people about the nature of His _____.
- g. Given Scripture's absolute _____ it is not surprising that its warnings overtook the fathers.
- h. Any survivor of that historic _____ would have acknowledged this truth.

CONCLUSION:

Because God's Word is always effective, the call to repentance is a call either to blessing or to judgment. Those who turn away from sin and turn to the Lord, embracing Him in faith and love, will experience His blessing. But those who reject His invitation to repent and turn to Him, walking instead in rebellion against Him, will in His perfect time face His wrath and judgment.

As we enter into this New Year, now is the time to return to the Lord. Even we who are believers need to at times repent and return to the Lord because we have taken our focus off our Savior who suffered and died and rose from the dead on our behalf. We have wandered our own way. When we do this we need to come to the Lord and repent and return to Him and at the beginning of the New Year is a good time to evaluate our lives and get back on track with our God.