

Sunday School Lesson May 10

Good morning, I hope you are well and blessed. **Happy Mother's Day.**

In honor of all Mothers. Let us remember our Mother as well as the late Peggy Morgan.

Mothers (by Peggy Morgan)

When God created the world,
He knew the need for a Mother,
Her tender touch, her loving care,
She would have a special place like no other.
God gave her strength that did not physically show,
A willingness to work with an untiring hand,
A quiet wisdom, a need to love,
And patience to listen and understand.
God would place in her care, the little ones,
His children which he hold dear.
He knew a Mother would teach them,
To love Him and know He would always be near.
She would always be there for her family;
To keep them from any strife,
To feed them, protect them, and guide them.
She would do this all of her life.
She would be the bearer of God's light,
In the night time of their fear;

Holding the ties that would bind them close,
And always she would be held so dear.
A Mother's love would be everlasting,
As the waves rolling on to a shore;
Her gifts of love would become a legacy, in time.
Traditions, from one generation to another – forever more.
Forgiveness would be a part of her nature,
Ingrained in her soul so deep;
For God knew she would be hurt, and hurt again,
But His promises she would live, and would keep.
So on this special day of days,
When springtime is on the wing;
Let us thank God for our Mothers,
And gratefully their praises sing.

Prayer: Most Holy Father, thank you for this day that you have given us to study your word. Thank you for your mercies and goodness. LORD, only you know where we would be without our mother's love. We ask you to bless our mothers with wisdom to teach and guide their children in a way that will help them to follow You and become women who will be pleasing in Your sight. On this special day set aside to honor Mothers we ask for a special touch from you LORD for each and every one of them.

We confess our need for you and we ask that you renew our hearts, minds, and lives, for the days ahead. Jesus, keep us focused on what is pure and right and give us the power to be obedient to your word. Almighty God, you are the only source of health and healing. In all pain, weariness and anxiety teach us to yield ourselves to your never failing care, knowing that your love

and power surrounds us, trusting in your wisdom to give us health, strength and peace when your time is best. We ask that you bring healing mercies to our church family members, our friends and neighbors that are going through sickness and battling ailments. Only you Lord, know our burdens and we ask for your help, so we can overcome them. We pray that you, will protect all personnel in the medical community as they continue to care for the sick. We pray for our national, state, and civic leaders, asking that you give them the wisdom to handle each situation as they lead our country. God, forgive us of our sins and open our hearts and minds as we seek to live a life pleasing and glorifying you. We ask these things in our Lord and Savior's name, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lesson for May 10, 2020 "Peace and Justice Reign" Scripture passage is from Zechariah chapter 8:1-8, 11-17.

Sources used for this lesson: The Bible, The Bible Knowledge Commentary by John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, Exploring The Minor Prophets by John Phillips, Rev. Ray Stedman Ministries, Bible.org, Steven J. Cole Sermon and The Present Word Adult Bible Lessons.

Zechariah encouraged the people to put away the sin in their lives and to continue rebuilding the temple. His visions described the judgment of Israel's enemies, the blessings to Jerusalem, and the need for God's people. He prophesied to the people of Judah after they returned from their seventy years of exile in Babylon. Zechariah's grandfather returned from Babylon, with his young grandson, with the first group of Israelites allowed back, in 538 BC under the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia. Because of his family lineage, Zechariah was a priest in addition to a prophet. As a "young man" at the time of his first prophecies (Zechariah 2:4), his life more than likely extended into the reign of Xerxes I (485-465 BC), the king best known in the Bible for making Esther the queen of Persia (Esther 1:1).

Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai the prophet, Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high priest. Zechariah returned to Jerusalem from Babylon with around 50,000 other Jewish exiles. Zechariah, a young man, especially when compared to his contemporary Haggai, came alongside the older prophet to deliver messages from the Lord to the Jewish remnant recently returned from Babylon. While Haggai's overall message had more of a cautionary tone to it (pointing out the Jews' sin and self-focus), Zechariah emphasized a tone of encouragement to the struggling Israelites trying to

rebuild their temple. The town of Babylon was located along the Euphrates River in present-day Iraq, about 50 miles south of Baghdad.

Zechariah's dated visions and messages in chapters 1–8 all take place in the same general time period as Haggai's, beginning in October–November 520 B.C. with a call for the people of Judah to repent (Zechariah 1:1). He then received eight visions on the restless night of February 15, 519 B.C. (1:7), followed by four messages that he preached on December 7, 518 B.C. (7:1). Though his final messages in chapters 9–14 go undated, the mention of Greece in 9:13 suggests the prophecies came much later in his life, presumably sometime in the 480s B.C., before Ezra (458 B.C.) and Nehemiah (444 B.C.) arrived to again revitalize the Jewish people.

Meaning "Yahweh remembers", Zechariah's name was appropriate to the purpose of his prophecies. His book brims over with the hope that God would remember His promises to His people, even after all the time they spent outside the land. The prophet used a simple structure of eight visions (Zechariah 1:1–6:15), four messages (7:1–8:23), and two oracles (9:1–14:21) to anticipate the completion of the temple and, ultimately, the future reign of the Messiah from Jerusalem. Like many of the prophets, Zechariah saw isolated snapshots of the future; therefore, certain events that seem to occur one right after the other in Zechariah's prophecy actually often have generations or even millennia between them.

To get a better understanding of Zechariah chapter 8, you have to review and have some information from chapter 7. Chapters 7 and 8 explained the four explanatory messages pertaining to the question about fasting that is asked in chapter 7:3. Please read Zechariah chapter 7. Zechariah 7:1-3 says, "In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, the month of Kislev. The people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-Melech, together with their men, to entreat the LORD, by asking the priests of the house of the LORD Almighty and the prophets, "Should I mourn and fast in the fifth month as I have done for so many years?"

Zechariah gave four messages. Three of the messages were introduced by the clause, "the word of the LORD Almighty came to me" (see 7:4, 8:1, 8:18). The second message was introduced similarly in 7:8-9 which says, "And the word of the LORD came again to Zechariah: This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Administer true justice, show mercy, and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien, or the poor. In your heart do not think evil of each other"".

In the 8th chapter of Zechariah is where we find the third response of the Lord to the question that the Jews asked in chapter 7:2-3. The entire third response is found in verses 1-17.

Zechariah's central themes in chapters 1–8 do not differ significantly from those of the prophets who preceded him. In a sense, their words, to which he regularly alludes, are already Scripture for him. He esteems the Temple service, and at the same time considers the observance of the precepts of righteousness, truth, and peace most important. Jerusalem is God's chosen city and He is jealous for its honor. The future of the non-Jewish nations is also concerned with the city, for they will eventually seek Yahweh and pray to him. They will acknowledge that God (elohim) is with the Jews (Zechariah 8:20–23). One innovative aspect of Zechariah's prophecy is the special importance he accords to the high priest. This is a result of the changed circumstances of the Persian period, in which it appeared that the Davidic monarchy would not be restored. The prophetic compromise was a dyarchy, in which Zerubbabel and Joshua would each sit on a throne (Zechariah 6:13) and that "'a counsel of peace' would exist between them", an outcome which failed to materialize. Zechariah, makes use of an angel, who instructs the prophet, explaining the strange and wondrous visions which the latter does not comprehend. Zechariah sees angels standing in God's presence, though he does not see God Himself, as previous prophets had dared (I Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6:1–2). Zechariah's language in describing the visions is prosaic and dry, and occasionally even confused.

When the people of Judah returned from 70 years of exile in Babylon, they were discouraged. The rebuilding of the temple seemed an impossible job. Their faith in God was weak. The prophet Zechariah wanted the returning remnants to remember who God was and that He had not forgotten them. No matter how tough their struggles might have been, they were not beyond God's control. Zechariah describes God as one who "stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the human spirit within a person" (12:1). The Lord Almighty was sufficient. You and I need that reminder as well. We can glimpse God's greatness through His attributes, revealed in His Word: God is eternal. "I am the Alpha and Omega", says the Lord God" (Revelation 1:8). There was no time when God did not exist. God is immutable, He can never change. You cannot improve on perfection. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). God is omniscient. He knows the past, present, and future. God knows the desires of our heart and the mysteries of the universe. Nothing is beyond His understanding (Isaiah 40:28). God is sovereign. God controls the entire universe (Col. 1:17). He is the storyteller of the past, the engineer of the present, and the architect of the future.

Zechariah proclaimed: "The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the LORD Almighty is their God." (12:5). We can be strong and confident and have an unshakable hope for the future because the Lord Almighty is our God. Judgment will come upon those who oppress God's people – it will come in God's time and at his command.

In Zechariah chapter 8 we read that, the LORD will return to Zion and make Jerusalem the City of Truth, old men and women will sit in Jerusalem in peace, children will play in the squares, and the LORD will bring his people back from exile around the world to live in Jerusalem. At that time "they shall be my people, and I will be their God in truth-faithfulness and righteousness." Jerusalem will be a place for the senior citizens and children alike. Read these words from Isaiah 65:2-22, "No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands".

In Zechariah 8:9-13, Zechariah recalled the time when the temple foundation was laid after the first exiles returned from Babylon in 536 BC. The prophets, including Zechariah and Haggai had encouraged the people to build, but there was much opposition from the neighboring nations (Ezra 4:1-7; 5:1-5). Some, 20 years later, they again encouraged them. This time the prophets speak of a time of full blessing by the LORD, and this full blessing will not be completed until Judah and Israel are a blessing to the nations. The entire nation, not just the Judean exiles from Babylon, but Judah and Israel; the nation will be reunited. This is a long term view of the present and future of Judah and Israel. The remnant was the small group of exiles who had returned from Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. Struggling to survive in the land, they became discouraged over the opposition they often faced for hostile neighbors. God had to give the temple workers a little push to get them moving. They had heard the prophet's words of encouragement; at this time they needed to stop listening and get to work.

The Present Word said that the faithful remnant studied God's word, prayed, and continued to trust in God throughout their seventy-year-long ordeal. For this reason God has, "purposed to do good", to them as they return to the land of promise.

In Zechariah 8:14-17. The prophet continues to contrast the past with the future. In the past, because of their rebellion and apostasy, divine discipline was the order of the day.

God always keeps his word (Psalm 117). This chapter again reinforces the theme that Israel, the LORD'S people chosen for a purpose, has a significant future in God's plan, and that she will be respected and will attract people and nations to the LORD. The LORD has designed a future for reunited Israel. No longer will Israel and her people be the outcasts. The time written about is after Jesus Christ returns to earth to rule as King over all the earth. (See Isaiah 2:1-4, Micah 4:1-5, Matthew 24, Acts 1:6-11, and many other texts speak of this).

Now blessing is projected for Judah and Jerusalem. This was possible for them at the present (in these days, Zechariah 8:14) if they will now follow the LORD by observing four commands: speak truth to each other, practice true and peaceful judgment at the judgment gates, do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and do not love perjury. (See proverbs 6:16-19). The LORD through Zechariah instructs and encourages the people about conduct for the present because of the hope for the future. God in effect said they had a job to do. We also have responsibilities: to tell the truth, exercise justice, and live peacefully.

Description of the future - This will be a time of peace, security, and prosperity for the young and old. Expectation for the present - In the meantime, the LORD instructed the house of Judah to speak truth to each other, practice true and peaceful judgment at the judgment gates, do not devise evil, and do not love perjury. Expectation for the future - People from all nations will be attracted to the Jews, seek the LORD of Hosts' favor, and seek to be blessed by association with them because they will know that God is with the Jews.

The Jewish nation has been "hated" through the centuries. This attitude seems to come from the fact that these people are the "chosen of God." In the future, this situation will change. The city of Jerusalem will be the "world center" of politics and economics. This coming situation is described by the faithful prophet. "As you have been an object of cursing among the nations, O Judah, and Israel, so will I save you, and you will be blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong." (Zechariah 8:13).

The promise to the Chosen Nation is quite clear. "This is what the LORD Almighty says": "Just as I had determined to bring disaster upon you and showed no pity when your father angered me, says the LORD Almighty, so

now I have determined to do good again to Jerusalem and Judah. Do not be afraid." "These are the things you are to do, speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts; do not plot evil against your neighbor, and do not swear falsely. I hate this, declares the LORD" (Zechariah 8:14-17). As His people, we must not only love what God loves; we also need to hate what He hates. He is the God of truth, we need to hate false doctrine, deception, lies, hypocrisy, and vague moral standards that drift with our godless culture.

Verse 19 answers the question raised by the delegation from Bethel (7:2-3) by showing that their fasts would be turned to feasts as the people experienced God's gracious blessings of salvation. The fast of the fourth month (Nebuchadnezzar's army broke through Jerusalem's wall, 2 Kings 25:3-4, Jeremiah 39:2), the fast of the fifth month (Nebuchadnezzar burned Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC, 2 Kings 25:8-10), the fast of the seventh month (assassination of Gedaliah, 2 Kings 25:25, Jeremiah 41:1-2 in 586 BC), and the fast of the tenth month (Nebuchadnezzar began the siege of Jerusalem, 2 Kings 25:1-2, Jeremiah 39:1) will now have spiritual meaning. Why? Because the LORD will be king of the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name (Zechariah 14:9). This is enough to motivate the love for truth and peace.

In the future day of blessing, people of the whole earth will join with Jews because of their relationship with the LORD. People will know God is with Israel and they are His people. As a result, many nations will come to Jerusalem to worship during the Millennium. People from other nations will see how God has rewarded his people for their faithfulness and will want to be included in their great blessings. "This is what the LORD Almighty says": "In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'" (Zechariah 8:23).

From stepping into the world – In such times, we should remind ourselves, as Zechariah reminds the exiles, of God's faithfulness in the past as a means of building our faith in God in the present. The knowledge that God brought me through last year (or last week, or the last few minutes) feeds my faith to make it through the next few minutes, then the next few weeks and then years ahead. You know who holds the future. Turning our focus away from ourselves and toward others will help with anxiety as well. If we follow God's command in verse 16, "Speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace" – we are not only keeping faithful to God's covenant but also putting aside our own fears and anxieties as we focus our energies on one another instead of on ourselves.

The proverb below is from a sermon titled, "Blessed to Bless" that I read this week, while preparing for this lesson.

An African proverb states, "There is only one crime worse than murder on the desert, and that is to know where the water is and not tell." God has led us to Christ, the living water. He has blessed us with His salvation and He promises to bless us even more abundantly in the future. But He didn't save us so that we can sit in the lifeboat feeling warm and cozy, oblivious to the lost' of the world. He saved us so that we may become a blessing to others. If you're saved, but you don't have your focus on blessing others, you've only got half the picture. He blessed you so that you may become a blessing.

Closing: For the love that casts out fear, the faith that sustains and the hope that never perishes, be with us now and forever more. Amen. God watch over us and take care of us.

Next week's lesson May 17, 2020 "Practice Justice" from Jeremiah chapter 21.