

Zechariah 8:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts.

Analysis

But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts. The pivotal word "**But now**" (ve-atah, וְעַתָּה) marks dramatic reversal—what was true before (verse 10) will no longer be true. The negative construction "**I will not be**" (lo ehyeh, לֹא אֶהְיֶה) explicitly negates continued judgment. God promises to relate differently to His people going forward compared to "**the former days**" (ba-yamim ha-rishonim, בַּיָּמִים הָרִאשׁוֹנִים) of discipline described in verse 10.

The term "**the residue**" (she'erit, שְׁעֵרִית), translated elsewhere as "remnant," identifies the post-exilic community as survivors of judgment who now inherit promises. Throughout prophetic literature, the "remnant" concept carries theological significance—though the majority perish in judgment, God preserves a faithful minority through whom He continues His redemptive purposes (Isaiah 10:20-22; Micah 2:12, 5:7-8; Romans 9:27, 11:5). These survivors receive mercy and become heirs of covenant promises.

The authoritative conclusion "**saith the LORD of hosts**" grounds this reversal in divine decree. God's sovereign decision to cease judgment and begin blessing doesn't depend on human merit but on His covenant faithfulness and predetermined purposes. This pattern appears throughout redemptive history: after flood judgment, God promised never again to destroy the earth with water (Genesis 9:11); after exile judgment, God promised restoration. The "but now" of divine grace interrupts the "former days" of judgment, demonstrating that God's

ultimate purpose is redemptive blessing, not destructive judgment (Lamentations 3:31-33).

Historical Context

The "former days" refers to the period of economic hardship and social instability (verse 10) that resulted from covenant disobedience—specifically, neglecting temple rebuilding while prioritizing personal houses (Haggai 1:4). During approximately 536-520 BC, God withheld blessing, allowing crop failures, economic stagnation, and social conflict as discipline. This pattern echoed earlier judgments: the Babylonian exile itself represented the climax of centuries of covenant unfaithfulness.

"But now" marks the turning point when the people responded to Haggai and Zechariah's prophetic call, resuming temple construction in 520 BC (Haggai 1:12-15). Their obedient response triggered God's promise to reverse discipline and restore blessing. Haggai 2:19 similarly declared: "From this day will I bless you." The moment of repentant action became the hinge on which God's dealings shifted from judgment to blessing.

This principle operates throughout Scripture. Moses told Israel that obedience brings blessing while disobedience brings curse (Deuteronomy 11:26-28, 28:1-68), yet even after experiencing curse, repentance opens the door to restoration (Deuteronomy 30:1-10). The New Testament shows that "now" is always the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2)—no matter how severe past judgment, repentance and faith access God's merciful reversal. Christ's first advent inaugurated the ultimate "but now": "But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What "former days" of hardship or discipline in your life might God be declaring finished through repentance and renewed obedience?
2. How does understanding God's discipline as temporary and purposeful (Hebrews 12:5-11) differ from viewing hardship as random bad luck?
3. In what ways does Christ's "but now" of new covenant grace (Romans 3:21, 6:22) supersede all former covenants and conditions?

Interlinear Text

אֲנִי הָרִאשִׁים כְּיָמֵי לֹא וְעַתָּה הֵ
H589 H7223 H3117 H3808 H6258
days as in the former
לְשֹׁאֵר יֵת הָעַם הַזֶּה נֹאֵם ה' יְהוָה
H7611 H5971 H2088 H5002 H3068
But now I will not be unto the residue of this people saith the LORD
צְבָאוֹת:
H6635
of hosts

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 12:1 (References Lord): And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

Haggai 2:19 (Parallel theme): Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.

Psalms 103:9 (Parallel theme): He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.

