

Zechariah 8:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.

Analysis

Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. This climactic verse expands the vision from cities (verse 21) to entire peoples and nations. The opening **"Yea"** (u-va'u, וְבָאוּ, "and shall come") confirms and intensifies what precedes. The phrase **"many people and strong nations"** (ammim rabbim ve-goyim atzumim, עַמִּים רַבִּים וְגוֹיִם עֲצוּמִים) uses two parallel terms: ammim (עַמִּים, peoples/ethnic groups) and goyim (גוֹיִם, nations/Gentiles)—the standard Hebrew words for non-Jewish peoples. The adjectives rabbim (רַבִּים, many) and atzumim (עֲצוּמִים, strong/mighty) emphasize scope and significance—not weak, insignificant groups but powerful nations.

Their purpose is dual: **"to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem"** (levaqesh et-Yahweh Tzeva'ot bi-Yerushalayim, לְבַקֵּשׁ אֶת־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת בִּירוּשָׁלַם) and **"to pray before the LORD"** (u-lechalot et-pnei Yahweh, וּלְחַלּוֹת אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה). "Seeking the LORD" implies coming for guidance, instruction, revelation—wanting to know God and His will (Isaiah 55:6, Amos 5:4). "Praying before the LORD" indicates worship, intercession, seeking favor. Together they depict comprehensive engagement with God—learning His ways and worshiping Him.

The location "in Jerusalem" specifies the historical center of God's redemptive activity. Yet the New Testament reveals that true worship isn't ultimately about physical location but Spirit and truth (John 4:21-24). Christ fulfills Jerusalem's role—He is where God meets humanity (John 1:14, Colossians 2:9). The church becomes the temple where God dwells by His Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16, Ephesians

2:21-22). The ultimate Jerusalem is the New Jerusalem, the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:2, 9-10), where all nations bring their glory (Revelation 21:24-26).

Historical Context

This prophecy stunningly promises that mighty Gentile empires will come seeking Israel's God. In Zechariah's day, Persia ruled the ancient Near East; before that, Babylon, Assyria, Egypt—all pagan powers that worshiped false gods and often oppressed Israel. The idea that such nations would abandon their gods to worship Yahweh in Jerusalem seemed impossible. Yet God promised it.

Fulfillment began gradually. Proselytes joined Israel (Ruth, Rahab, Naaman partially). After Christ's resurrection, the gospel spread rapidly: Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), Roman centurion Cornelius (Acts 10), Philippian jailer (Acts 16), diverse converts throughout the Roman Empire. Paul's letters addressed mixed congregations of Jews and Gentiles worshiping together (Ephesians 2:11-22, Romans 9-11). The Colossian church included Greeks, Scythians, slaves, and free (Colossians 3:11).

The missionary movement through history—from Paul's journeys through William Carey, Hudson Taylor, and modern missions—has brought the gospel to every continent. Yet full realization awaits Christ's return. Revelation depicts the consummation: "The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it" (Revelation 21:24). The promise that "many people and strong nations" will seek the LORD finds ultimate fulfillment in the redeemed from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (Revelation 5:9, 7:9).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does this promise that 'strong nations' will seek the LORD challenge any sense of cultural or ethnic superiority in the church?
2. What does it mean practically for believers today to 'seek the LORD' and 'pray before the LORD' with the urgency and devotion described here?
3. How should the church balance continuity with God's historical work through Israel with recognition that in Christ, all barriers between peoples are broken down?
4. In what ways does your understanding of Christian mission align with this vision of nations eagerly seeking to know God?
5. How can believers cultivate the kind of spiritual vitality that makes others want to seek the LORD alongside them?

Interlinear Text

וְבָאוּ	עַמֵּי יִם	רַבִּים	וְגוֹ' מ	עֲצוֹמֵי יִם	לְבַקֵּשׁ	אֶת	יְהוָה:
shall come	people	Yea many	nations	and strong	to seek	H853	the LORD
H935	H5971	H7227	H1471	H6099	H1245		H3068
וְצָבָא	בִּירוּשָׁלַם	וּלְחַל	אֶת	פְּנֵי י	יְהוָה:		
of hosts	in Jerusalem	and to pray	H853	before	the LORD		
H6635	H3389	H2470		H6440	H3068		

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 8:21 (Prayer): And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also.

Revelation 15:4 (References Lord): Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

Revelation 21:24 (Parallel theme): And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

Isaiah 25:7 (Parallel theme): And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.

Galatians 3:8 (Parallel theme): And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

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