

Zechariah 8:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.

Analysis

Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem—God announces His decisive return to the city from which His glory departed during the exile (Ezekiel 10:18-19, 11:23). The verb "**returned**" (shavti, שָׁבְתִי) from shuv means to turn back or restore, answering the anguished question of whether God had permanently abandoned His people. Divine presence wasn't merely visiting but "**dwelling**" (shakanti, שָׁכַנְתִּי) permanently—the same root as Shekinah, God's manifest presence that filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35) and Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8:10-11).

And Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth (ir ha-emet, עִיר־הָאֱמֶת)—Emet denotes faithfulness, reliability, and truth in covenant relationship. Isaiah called Jerusalem "**the faithful city**" that became a harlot (Isaiah 1:21), but God promises restoration of covenant integrity. This city will embody truth because God Himself dwells there, making it what it was always meant to be. **And the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain** designates Mount Zion as har ha-qodesh (הַר־הַקֹּדֶשׁ), the holy mountain set apart by divine presence. Joel 3:17 echoes this: "So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain."

For Christians, this prophecy finds initial fulfillment when Christ (God incarnate) entered Jerusalem and cleansed the temple, declaring it His Father's house (John 2:16). Yet the ultimate fulfillment awaits the New Jerusalem descending from

heaven, where "the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them" (Revelation 21:3). The city needs no temple, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Revelation 21:22)—permanent, unmediated divine presence forever.

Historical Context

When Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC, Ezekiel witnessed the departure of God's glory—the Shekinah leaving the temple and city (Ezekiel 10-11). This signaled covenant judgment: God withdrew His protective presence, allowing Babylon to devastate the city. The exile represented both physical displacement and spiritual abandonment. For seventy years, God's glory was absent from Zion.

When exiles returned under Cyrus's decree (538 BC) and began rebuilding the temple (536 BC), many questioned whether God would truly return. When the foundation was laid, old men who remembered Solomon's temple wept, recognizing how inferior this structure was (Ezra 3:12). Would God's glory fill this modest building as it had the former temple? Zechariah's prophecy answers emphatically: yes, God will return and dwell among His people.

Yet even the second temple, completed in 516 BC and later expanded by Herod, lacked the Ark of the Covenant, the Urim and Thummim, and other elements. Jewish tradition recognized that the Shekinah glory never filled the second temple as it had Solomon's. The prophecy awaited fuller fulfillment in Christ's presence in that temple (John 2:19-21, "the temple of his body") and ultimately in the eschatological reality where God dwells with His people forever without temple mediation.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's promise to "return" and "dwell" in Zion demonstrate that exile was temporary discipline, not permanent abandonment?
2. What does it mean for a city or community to be called "a city of truth," and how is this only possible through God's presence?
3. In what ways does Christ's incarnation ("the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," John 1:14) fulfill God's promise to dwell with His people?

Interlinear Text

כֹּה	אָמַר	יְהוָה	שׁ בָּרַחֲמֵי	אֶל	צִיּוֹן	וְשָׁכְנָתִי
H3541	Thus saith	of the LORD	I am returned	H413	unto Zion	and will dwell
	H559	H3068	H7725		H6726	H7931
בֵּית וְ	יְרוּשָׁלַם	וְנִקְרָא	יְרוּשָׁלַם	עִיר	הָאֵמֶת	
in the midst	and Jerusalem	shall be called	and Jerusalem	a city	of truth	
H8432	H3389	H7121	H3389	H5892	H571	
הַר	יְהוָה	צְבָאֹת	הַר	הַקֹּדֶשׁ		
and the mountain	of the LORD	of hosts	and the mountain	the holy		
H2022	H3068	H6635	H2022	H6944		

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 1:16 (References Lord): Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:3 (Parallel theme): And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Isaiah 66:20 (Holy): And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as

the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD.

Isaiah 1:26 (Parallel theme): And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.

Colossians 2:9 (Parallel theme): For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Jeremiah 33:16 (References Lord): In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.

Jeremiah 31:23 (Holy): Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness.

John 1:14 (Truth): And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John 14:23 (Parallel theme): Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

2 Corinthians 6:16 (Parallel theme): And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.