

Zechariah & Luke: The Returning King

Lesson 1: The Risen, Reigning, Returning King

Anchor Verses: ...Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you...~Zechariah 1.3
For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. ~Luke 19.10

An iconoclast is “a person who attacks cherished beliefs or institutions; a destroyer of images used in religious worship” or who opposes their veneration¹. Jesus is an iconoclast. This is not because of the persecution He endured, the party-animal accusations He received, or the smeared reputation that resulted from hanging out with horrendous sinners, socially unacceptable misfits, and people who are easy to hate. Jesus is an iconoclast because He revealed the impartiality of God’s love and the lengths God went to pursue a permanent, everlasting, intimate relationship with horrendous sinners, socially unacceptable misfits, and people who are easy to hate. Only the **LORD of Hosts** has the authority to interfere with our sin-driven desire to decide what is acceptable before a Holy God. His command and call to **repentance** obliterates our DIY bastion of “cherished beliefs”.

LORD of Hosts, Holy God, what have we done? Are we listening? (Zechariah 1.4). In Christ, you redeemed us from having to “deal with us”, from treating as we deserve (Zechariah 1.6). You have provided Your very words to all people. You lived among us, showing us by real example the depth of Your compassion and love (Luke 1.1-4). Forgive us for sinfully evaluating the worth and sinfulness of others by cherishing our desired beliefs about who is worthy of knowing You personally and entering Your eternal presence. LORD God, enable and empower me to turn from my evil ways and my evil deeds to listen to You (Zechariah 1.4.) Increase my belief in You so that I may have certainty concerning the things I will be taught as I study You (Luke 1.4).

Zechariah 1.1-6 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying, **2** “The LORD was very angry with your fathers. **3** Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.

4 Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.’ But they did not hear or pay attention to me, declares the LORD. **5** Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?

6 But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they repented and said, ‘As the LORD of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us.’”

Luke 1.1-4 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, **2** just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, **3** it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **4** that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

Diamonds: What is the first thing you must do when someone is bitten by a venomous snake? Suck out the poison, right? Wrong! That response is a myth, and there are many kits sold that include tools used to respond in the most inaccurate method when handling a venomous snake bite². Both Zechariah and Luke write in response to the pursuit of the truth about God. Rather than perpetuate false beliefs and misunderstandings, these authors respond to God’s prompting to immerse His people in the truth of Him, not in their religious ritual, false teachings, nor an inaccurate collection of common knowledge. Just like the right response to a venomous snake bite is life-saving, so is the right response to the scripturally accurate truth of Jesus.

¹ Google dictionary; Merriam-Webster dictionary

² The appropriate response to a venomous snake bite is to elevate the bitten area above the heart, allowing the venom to engage the lymph nodes/lymphatic system. And get to the hospital for anti-venom, but don't bring the snake to the hospital! They rather assume the worst venom over a personal experience with a venomous snake.

Through Zechariah, God's prophet or messenger, God is calling His people to return to Him. The command to return to God is supported through a very brief history lesson in these verses. God's wrath poured out on generations of His people in response to their disobedience of God's commands. Their willful disobedience resulted in idolatrous hearts which lead to attitudes and actions against worshiping and glorifying God alone.

After generations of exile and extreme hardship, the remnant of God's people was a "dispirited" community, content to remain surrounded by material and spiritual comforts in Babylon rather than return to Jerusalem (where God's temple, His symbolic dwelling place, still lay mostly in ruins). Yet, through the prophet Haggai, God had broken His silence to His people by calling them to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Just as Haggai was calling God's people to physical action, in tandem Zechariah was calling His people to spiritual action.

1. What does God want from His people (Zechariah 1.3)?
2. What must the people do before God will return to them? Use verse 6 to help you understand.
3. What does this interaction between God and His people teach you about Him?

Luke acts as an "investigative reporter" to pursue the truth about God³. It is suspected by scholars that his collection of sources includes both Matthew and Mark. In comparison to the details emphasized in the other gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, and John), Luke's details emphasize and reveal who gets into God's Kingdom. Luke accomplishes the answer to this query (who gets into God's Kingdom) through factual evidence of Jesus as God's Son, the Messiah who fulfills all of prophecy past, who lives in His people today, and who is to come again--the Risen, Reigning, Returning King!

4. Why do you think Luke is writing this account of Jesus for Theophilus (likely a nobleman or a high ranking official within the Roman Empire)? Consider your answer using unspoken clues found in Luke 1.4.
5. What questions do you have about Jesus, His story, and/or His life?

Deity: LORD of Hosts⁴~(Zechariah 1.3) Throughout scripture angels are referred to as "hosts". Capitalizing the name of the LORD references God, His Holiness, and His absolute authority over all. God as the LORD of Hosts pictures Him as the supreme military commander of "an enormous host of soldiers ready to carry out the orders of their superior" (Matthew 26.53).

As the LORD of hosts (or angels), God is the all-powerful Ruler over the entire universe. All power and authority are His. He alone intervenes to provide victory for His people. He alone brings world peace. At the same time, He is available to hear the prayers of His people (Psalm 80.19). There is no other God like this.

The sovereign LORD of hosts has the grace to always be there for the one who comes to Him through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The King of glory, who commands the armies of heaven and who will eventually defeat all

³ Ryken, p.9

⁴ Gotquestions.org

His enemies in this world, is none other than Jesus Christ. He is the LORD of hosts (Revelation 19.11-20).

Notice that prior to the life and death of Jesus, God is referenced as the LORD of Hosts. However, after Jesus's death and ascension back to heaven, God gives Jesus this military title. Choose one or two verses from the Old Testament provided: 1 Samuel 17.45; Psalm 33.6; 80.19; 89.8; Deuteronomy 4.19; Nehemiah 9.6. Use the scripture you chose to answer the next two questions.

Read Matthew 26.53, Luke 2.13, and Revelation 19.11-20.

6. How does this title for God connect both the Old and New Testament? What does this title teach you about God, and about His Son Jesus?

7. In Zechariah 1.6, we are told that the people historically identify God in His role as a military commander when He deals with their disobedience. Why does our disobedience require the intervention of a divine military commander, the LORD of Hosts?

Doctrine: Repentance⁵~ (Zechariah 1.4) “Repentance is a response to God’s gracious call to salvation. It includes a genuine sorrow for one’s sin (Luke 5.1-11) and turning away from one’s sin toward Christ (Acts 26.15-20), and a life that reflects lasting change and transformation (Psalm 119.57-60). It is the human counterpart to God’s work of regeneration; in other words, the human side of our conversion.”

Repentance is a preparation for “God’s kingdom to expand” into God’s people on earth. The purpose of repentance is cleansing to allow “God’s presence to come down and invade” into the lives of His people.⁶

8. Prayerfully ponder these last two sentences. How do they impact your attitude and eagerness to repent?

9. What hope is there in repentance? How does repentance lead God’s people to joy?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer: Every week we ask you to write out a scripture verse found in any portion of the lesson. As you write it, modify it by filling in your personal name, your situation, or any other modification that engages you to consider God. You will NOT be expected to share the exact details of your prayer. However, your group will be exponentially blessed and encouraged as you choose to share any portion of your prayer every week. Truly, do NOT miss out on God’s blessing for you and for your sister’s-in-Christ by skipping this section or remaining silent week after week.

Freely use this example or boldly (and bravely!) write using a different verse from this week’s study that God has seared into your heart and mind:

⁵ The Gospel Project, *The 99 Essential Doctrines: #67 Repentance*, Lifeway Christian Resources (2018)

⁶ Gladd, Benjamin, *Help Me Teach the Bible, Benjamin Gladd on Teaching Luke*, The Gospel Coalition (April 1, 2020)

Zechariah 1.3-4 + Luke 1.4:

LORD of Hosts, my Savior, in love You say to me, Return to Me, [insert your name], and I will return to you, [insert your name]. LORD of hosts, because You initiate this call to me, I know You are watching me, keeping me in Your Sovereign hands. Thank you for calling out to me first, for initiating a relationship with me. LORD of Hosts, I repent as You command. Please freely operate as LORD of Hosts with my sins: [honestly write out your sins you repent of; you will not be expected to share this portion so be honest with God and yourself!].

Thank you for listening to my sins, and for Your forgiveness found in Christ. Open my heart and ears and mind as I continue to study Zechariah and Luke so that I may have certainty concerning [insert your answers to Question 5]. Amen.

Lecture Aim: Genuine repentance leads to God-centered living.

Lecture Outline:

- I. The Call to Return (Zechariah 1.1-6) **T1:** God-centered people regularly return to God through genuine repentance.
 - a. When was the last time you genuinely repented of your sins?
 - b. How specifically do you name those sins?
- II. The Certainty of the Returnees (Luke 1.1-4) **T2:** God-centered people remain in awestruck wonder of the character and works of the God-Man, Jesus.
 - a. Which specific sin has a greater hold on your heart than Jesus?
 - b. How might your sin be clouding your vision of the awe-inspiring wonder of the character and works of Jesus?

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