

Introduction

The biblical working of redemption and restoration on God's part are always found in the company of His expectation of transformation on the part of those being redeemed or restored. This is always a "one-way" process by which we drop the world's ways and exclusively adopt His Word and ways going forward. James expresses this as becoming "doers of the word".

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

James 1:22-25

This was a principle evidenced in the Old Testament teachings of what God expected from His people as an integral process of redemption and/or restoration. In reality, the standard did not change from one Testament to the next, but always pointed to Christ the Word as the standard by which all transformation is measured.

Read verses 1-3

¹Ask rain from the LORD at the time of the spring rain—
The LORD who makes the storm clouds;
And He will give them showers of rain, vegetation in the field to each man.

²For the teraphim speak iniquity,
And the diviners see lying visions
And tell false dreams;
They comfort in vain.
Therefore the people wander like sheep,
They are afflicted, because there is no shepherd.

³"My anger is kindled against the shepherds,
And I will punish the male goats;

Q: To what did people of Zechariah's day associate rain?

A: With God's blessing. As an agrarian society, rain affected agriculture so as to not just produce personal sustenance, but an abundance which could be sold to provide for their livelihood.

Q: So what is the contrast between v.1 and 2?

A: Seeking that blessing from God instead of from idols.

Q: What is the parallel spiritual meaning of this text?

A: The rain also represented spiritual blessings, so it also speaks of seeking God instead of idols when it comes to the spiritual as well.

Q: What are teraphim?

A: They first appear in Scripture in Genesis 31:19 as "household idols". Rather than being idols with dedicated shrines and places of worship, they seem to be "portable" and kept within one's household.

Q: What is the chief effect attributed to the Teraphim?

A: They "speak iniquity", iniquity describing sin that is based on twisting God's existing Word into something more personally desirable. In other words, it does not outright replace or refute God's Word, but dilutes or redefines it according human notions giving it the look and feel of the real thing.

For the LORD of hosts has visited
His flock, the house of Judah,
And will make them like His
majestic horse in battle.

Q: What are the tools of “the diviners”—the false prophets?

1. “...see lying visions...”
2. “...tell false dreams...”
3. “...comfort in vain”.

Q: What do diviners attempt to do through these things?

A: To foretell the future in an iniquitous manner so as to corrupt the truth by twisting it.

“Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams,” declares the LORD, “and related them and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit,” declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 23:32

Q: What is the next effect of these activities?

A: “...there is no shepherd”. It leaves God’s people without true leadership who would otherwise lead according to His Word and ways.

Q: What is a New Testament example of God’s anger with “the male goats”—that is, the leaders, and His decision to visit the flock?

When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things. — Mark 6:34

Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. — Matthew 9:36

Q: What will be the result of God’s personal visitation?

A: His people previously characterized as wandering, disorganized sheep become “His majestic horse in battle”, a depiction of something very organized with direction and purpose.

Application: If God’s people will **turn** personally to him, **forsaking** whatever false replacements corrupted leadership offers, God will not just **take care** of them, but **transform** them in the course of dealing with those failed leaders.

Read verses 4-5

Q: What greater thing are the terms “cornerstone”, “tent peg” and “bow of battle” describing?

A: They are three aspects of the Messiah.

Q: What is the meaning of “the cornerstone”?

A: There are two prominent scriptural uses, one as the most important foundational stone in the temple foundation, the other as the capstone which completes the house of God. In either case, it is the representation of Christ upon whom everything else is built or with whom God’s house is held together and completed.

⁴From them will come the
cornerstone,
From them the tent peg,
From them the bow of battle,
From them every ruler, all of
them together.

⁵They will be as mighty men,
Treading down the enemy in the
mire of the streets in battle;
And they will fight, for the LORD
will be with them;
And the riders on horses will be
put to shame.

The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief corner stone.
Psalm 118:22

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,
Ephesians 2:19-21

Q: What is the meaning of "the tent peg"?

A: This is attached to a tent's ropes and hammered into the ground so as keep the tent erect. Whereas the cornerstone represents building upon Christ the Word, the peg mimics the spiritual stature resulting from being tied to Christ the Word.

Q: What is the meaning of "the bow of battle"?

A: In the ancient world this is a primary symbol of authority and power, distinctly identified "of battle" so as to distinguish between hunting for one's daily needs versus engaging the enemy.

He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons;
He makes His arrows fiery shafts.
Psalm 7:13

Point: *These three metaphors for aspects of the Messiah's working are also the greater responsibilities which accompany the leadership of God's people to provide the foundation of God's Word, to keep the people erect spiritually by their compliance with God's Word, and thus be able to be victorious over all who come against them. Leadership without the Word in reality is worse than no leadership because it is actually false leadership.*

Q: What might be significant about ultimately becoming "mighty men" in v.5?

A: This is a term which referred specifically to those following David who were not just physically mighty, but equally spiritually mighty as well. The heavenly attributes work in the visible, earthly situations as well.

Application: *Both the working of the **Word** in the Old Testament as well as the New produce the same result: **transformation** into the **likeness** of the Messiah.*

But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. —
Ephesians 4:20-24

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But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.
2 Corinthians 3:18

⁶I will strengthen the house of Judah,
And I will save the house of Joseph,
And I will bring them back,
Because I have had compassion on them;
And they will be as though I had not rejected them,
For I am the LORD their God and I will answer them.
⁷Ephraim will be like a mighty man,
And their heart will be glad as if from wine;
Indeed, their children will see it and be glad,
Their heart will rejoice in the LORD.

Read verses 6-7

Q: What is “the house of Judah” and “the house of Joseph”?

A: “Judah” refers to those from every tribe who migrated south to take up residence in the Southern Kingdom of Judah who desired to continue worshiping and serving the Lord according to His Word; “Joseph” and his son “Ephraim” refer to those in the Northern Kingdom of Israel who established and pursued their own false religion.

Q: How is this reflected in the different way God will deal with each?

A: He will “strengthen” Judah—that is, build upon the faithful remnant found within which describes a spiritual revival, whereas God will “save” Joseph in a picture of having to effect salvation from their activities. This is borne out but the accompanying qualification, “I will bring them back”.

Q: How is God’s grace especially demonstrated in His actions toward “the house of Joseph”?

A: He “will bring them back...as though I had not rejected them”. But God will go even further so that “Ephraim will be like a mighty man”. (v.7) Restoration will be followed with unwarranted blessing so that there is not merely recovery, but transformation into someone spiritually formidable.

Q: How does the promise in v.6, “I will answer them” tie in to the opening of this chapter?

A: The opening addressed the need to call on the Lord rather than the teraphim and diviners, which produced anything but the gladness and rejoicing experienced here.

Q: What is the purpose of including “their children”?

A: It makes this a generational message so that God’s blessings will be experienced beyond the limits of this present generation and extend into future ones. It is a powerful testimony of God’s working in that one’s faithfulness can produce benefits for those who follow in their spiritual footsteps.

Application: God is working to both **strengthen** the faithful and fully **revitalize** the backslidden not just for the sake of the present **generation**, but for the ones to follow. **Individual** transformation leads to **group** transformation.

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⁸I will whistle for them to gather them together,
 For I have redeemed them;
 And they will be as numerous as they were before.
⁹When I scatter them among the peoples,
 They will remember Me in far countries,
 And they with their children will live and come back.
¹⁰I will bring them back from the land of Egypt
 And gather them from Assyria;
 And I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon
 Until no room can be found for them.
¹¹And they will pass through the sea of distress
 And He will strike the waves in the sea,
 So that all the depths of the Nile will dry up;
 And the pride of Assyria will be brought down
 And the scepter of Egypt will depart.
¹²And I will strengthen them in the LORD,
 And in His name they will walk," declares the LORD.

Read verses 8-12

Observation: *We could engage in a protracted, deep discussion about all this passage references when it comes to the national restoration of Israel we witnessed in 1948 and all that has followed since. However, rather than explore each of these details in that context, we need to consider the greater working which is being described here which actually places that event in the proper perspective.*

Q: Carefully examine the text of these verses. What would be the biblical reason that the goal of Israel's reconstitution as a nation is never specifically promised here?

A: God's original plan for Israel was never to duplicate the structure of other nations by having an earthly king and supporting governmental structure. They were to wholly worship and serve God directly.

Q: How are there various geographic positions listed in this text?

- "...among the peoples". (v.9)
- "...in far countries..." (v.9)
- "...from the land of Egypt..." (v.10)
- "...from Assyria..." (v.10)

Q: What is the process they will have to go through in the course of being brought back to the land?

A: "And they will pass through the sea of distress" which will be dealt with supernaturally by the Lord in that "He will strike the waves of the sea". (v.14)

Point: *What happened at the Red Sea is replayed again not just in Israel's return from Captivity in Zechariah's day, but has a future fulfillment in the End Times as well. Remember, they were brought out of Egypt to serve God, not form a government. This End Times process is spoken of in other Scripture:*

'Alas! for that day is great,
 There is none like it;
 And it is the time of Jacob's distress,
 But he will be saved from it.
 Jeremiah 30:7

Q: But what is the purpose for which God will bring them back to the land?

- "...I will strengthen them in the LORD..." (v.12)
- "...in His name they will walk..." (v.12)

Point: *Although there is certainly a literal return of the Jews to the land of Israel, the greater sign of the fulfillment of God's prophetic Word concerning this phenomenon is their spiritual return. The spiritual restoration of the Jewish people is the bigger prerequisite for the final work of God than merely reforming a government.*

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Application: *There is still the ultimate **transformation** to come in the large-scale **return** to God through the wholesale acceptance of **Yeshua** before full restoration to **the land** can take place.*

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