

I. Chapter 1: 2-6

1. Return to me and I will return to you (V.3)

In the Old Testament, God's chosen people did not succeed in following the Lord. Both the Israelites and the Jews were taken as captives to foreign lands under God's discipline. At that time, when God displayed His great power to bring His people back from other lands to the Promised Land, the first thing God needed to do was to comfort and deliver His people, to console them and restore God's purpose.

Yet in this process of comfort and restoration, we see from verse 3 the first word God speaks: Return to Me, and I will return to you.

Brothers and sisters, though this verse might appear ordinary, it is exceedingly precious to us. God does not say, "Return to My aid," nor does He say, "Return to my blessings." Instead, He simply says, Return to Me—come back and approach Me.

More often than not, when God plans to restore a person, His work is to turn that person's heart back to Himself, not just to give them external blessings and benefits.

2. Pay attention (V.4)

Sisters and brothers, when the Lord reaches out to us today through the prophet, calling on us to turn towards Him, we must not just hear the call — more vitally, we need to focus.

Why didn't their ancestors heed the prophets' words? It wasn't that they didn't physically hear, but rather, they didn't truly listen within their hearts. Even though their ears received the words, the truth slipped in one ear and out the other. When the prophets conveyed God's word to their forefathers, they didn't give it serious and sincere attention.

Sisters and brothers, how we should seriously focus on God's Word! In every generation, God has been sowing the seeds of His will among us repeatedly. Yet, how many of us genuinely pay attention to His Word?

To pay attention means that when we hear God's Word, we don't just listen nonchalantly, but store it in our hearts and contemplate it repeatedly. It means not only contemplating it, but also purposefully and willingly exploring why God has uttered such words. Moreover, it means combining this with prayer, asking the Lord to reveal to us the insight and concealed meaning within His Word.

Sisters and brothers, it is so essential to heed God's Word today. Why is the church arid and desolate? It is because very few people genuinely give earnest attention to God's Word, study it wholeheartedly, pray over it, and stand firmly with complete confidence in it.

We have heard God's Word innumerable times with our external ears, yet very little of it truly sinks deep into our hearts, and even less of it turns into spiritual drive that changes our lives. If we want the words we hear externally to settle in our hearts and become internal spiritual strength, this can only occur when we truly pay attention.

Today God speaks to us in two ways: one is through the Bible, and the other is through our spirit. Very often, God speaks to us through both of these ways at the same time.

When God's word comes and His holy constraint arrives, most of the time we are unworthy of His word and unable to obey. At such moments, the only thing we can do is look up to God, come calmly and humbly into His presence, confess our weakness and inability, and ask Him to grant us grace once more. May we open our hearts, allow ourselves to be transformed, yield to God because of His love, and obey the Lord out of His loving kindness.

If we have such a heart—willing to let God's word enter into our inner being and become one with us—this very process is what it means to pay attention.

3. His words and statutes bring judgement (V.5-6)

Man has fallen, yet God remains holy. For fallen man to collaborate with the

holy God and labor alongside Him, he must unavoidably come under God’ s divine judgment. In a negative sense, judgment is the punishment man endures for turning away from God. In a positive sense, it is precisely the path through which we can partner with God: it purifies the defilement within us, eradicates the sin concealed in our inner selves, and restores us once more into the presence of the Lord. It enables God’ s hand to continue working within us, to fulfill His good pleasure through us, and to allow every word of God to penetrate deeply into our innermost being.

If we brothers and sisters possess such a heart and determination — to let everything God does flow through our inner being—we will be repeatedly washed and cleansed by the Holy Spirit, refined and purified over and over again. Hence, brothers and sisters, we should not dread God’ s judgment; instead, we ought to embrace it. For every judgment is a cleansing work of the Holy Spirit upon us, and every act of judgment is a spiritual purging the Lord brings into our lives.

4. Conclusion of 1: 2-6

Therefore, in Zechariah chapter 1 verse 6, we see the Lord’ s deepest burden: He desires the inhabitants to return to Himself.

This returning to Himself reveals two aspects:

- First, you must hear Me and pay attention to Me;
- Second, you must pay attention to My words and My statutes—not merely follow the way of your fathers.

For the reason that your forefathers could repent and return to Me in the past was all based upon the efficacy of My word and statutes. From this we can clearly see: If we desire to return to the Lord once again, we cannot do apart from His Word and His statutes.

Only when we pay attention to His Word and His statutes can we have the strength to turn back into God’ s presence. Therefore, in restoring His people, God very often requires man to give heed to God’ s Word and His statutes.

II. Chapter 1: 7-17

1. The one who rides the red horse

In verse 8 The one who rides the red horse refers to God, and the red horse symbolizes that He comes with complete redemption.

2. Myrtle tree in the hollow

The myrtle tree symbolizes the Israelites. One of the characteristics of the myrtle tree is that it is rather short, growing only one to two meters tall, standing inconspicuous among all kinds of trees. This symbolizes the real condition of Israelites at that time. Because God disciplined them for seventy years, they were not powerful among the nations but remained small and humble. Moreover, the myrtle tree grows in the hollow, making it appear even more unremarkable in comparison with many other plants — other nations around Israel.

3. Four horns

"I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, there were four horns. Then I asked the angel who talked with me, 'What are these?' And he said to me, 'These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.'" (verses 18–19).

These four horns represent four kingdoms and their rulers: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and the Roman Empire. They are typified by the great image in Daniel chapter 2 and the four beasts in Daniel 7:3–8, all of which afflicted and destroyed God's chosen people.

4. Four craftsmen

"Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen. I said, 'What are these coming to do?' He said, 'These are the horns that scattered Judah so that no one could lift up their head; but these craftsmen have come to terrify them and cast down the horns of the nations, which lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter it.'" (verses

20–21).

These four craftsmen are the instruments God uses, including the stone cut out without hands, to destroy the four kingdoms and their rulers that devastated the nation of Israel. Christ is one of the four craftsmen; He is the stone cut out without hands, who will strike and crush the great image.

The first three empires — Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece — were all overthrown in a most skillful way by the empire that followed. When Darius of Media came to defeat Belshazzar, Babylon was conquered overnight. How skillful Darius was! Then, as revealed in Daniel chapter 8, the male goat coming from Macedonia — the Grecian Empire led by Alexander the Great — trampled down the ram, which represents Persia. History tells us that Alexander the Great acted with extraordinary wisdom and strategy, and he is one of the craftsmen raised up against the four horns. Afterward, the Roman Empire rose to subdue Greece. These four empires stand as the central thread of human history. In the end, the revived Roman Empire will be utterly shattered by Christ, the ultimate Craftsman.

All four empires afflicted and destroyed Israel, yet in the end, each was brought down by the four craftsmen raised up by God. (For the revived Roman Empire, this is a future event.) This is a word of promise that brings comfort and encouragement.