



At the age of 23, I worked as a river guide for the JH Ranch, a Christian Camp in Northern California. The Klamath River was my home for many days and nights. The Dragon's Tooth was the largest and most treacherous rapid on our route.

The proper position to run this rapid was to gently back paddle in order to control your speed as you approached. Then you'd allow the left side eddy to barely grab the front of your boat so you spun to the backward position. Then you'd feel the power of the river dig in and surge your boat downstream approaching the 8-foot drop—hearing the roar of the water, in the backwards position! At this point, you had to trust you had the correct position and go with the power of the river.

The Dragon's Tooth was on our left side as we shot down the drop. At the bottom of the 8-foot drop the hydraulics would simultaneously spin the boat so you're facing forward and suck you into a hole. It was at this point that I'd scream out, "Forward paddle!" And everyone's fear and adrenaline always kicked in with amazing power. We'd pull out of the hydraulic hole and continue paddling hard in order to avoid getting pinned against the 30-foot rock wall on our left!

The lesson they drilled into our heads during training was this: respect the power of the river. And that reminds me of the message of Zechariah the prophet. Zechariah delivered this message to the Israelites:

- » The Spirit of God is a constant, powerful force that is moving.
- » You will never stop the Spirit from moving because He is eternal.
- » It is futile, foolish and sinful to resist the powerful movement of the Spirit.

I'm going to summarize the message of Zechariah's 14 chapters with the concept of Respect the Spirit. Now if I could tie it the river and the Spirit, it would be this. Your best response, as you respect the river and respect the Spirit is:

- » get in the right position
- » do your part
- » let the river/Spirit take you where He is already going

A verse that encapsulates this theme is:

**"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the LORD Almighty (Zechariah 4:6).**

**In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berekiah, the son of Iddo: (1:1).**

The second year of King Darius—this is the exact same time that the prophet Haggai prophesied. So you'll remember that during this time period 42,000 Israelites have returned to Jerusalem and the surrounding area, re-inhabiting their former land. They have been back for 15 years. When they returned, they expected, according to the prophecies of Isaiah, for the kingdom of God to break forth in power and glory. It didn't. They have experienced resistance to the rebuilding construction project of the temple and stopped construction. They have been busy building very nice houses for themselves, re-cultivating their farms, re-establishing commerce and having babies. After waiting 15 years, God has now thrown a wrench in their plans by removing the satisfaction of food, drink and work and hit the area with a drought.

Zechariah is writing them to encourage them to work and complete the temple building project, but he does it in an unexpected way. While Haggai calls them out directly, Zechariah inspires them indirectly with instruction to respect the power of the Spirit.

### **Three ways we respect the power of the Spirit.**

**Get in the right position: "Return to the Lord"**

**"The LORD was very angry with your ancestors. Therefore tell the people: This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Return to me,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'and I will return to you,' says the LORD Almighty. Do not be like your ancestors, to whom the earlier prophets proclaimed: This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Turn from your evil ways and your evil practices.' But they would not listen or pay attention to me, declares the LORD. Where are your ancestors now? And the prophets, do they live forever? But did not my words and my decrees, which I commanded my servants the prophets, overtake your ancestors?" (1:2–6a).**

Notice how the Lord uses persuasion and historical evidence to communicate His message "Return to Me":

History—the Lord was very angry with your ancestors (v. 2).

Persuasion—if you return to me, I will return to you (v. 3).

History—don't repeat the mistakes of your ancestors and ignore me (v. 4).

History—notice how ignoring me worked out for your ancestors: they are gone (v. 5).

Persuasion—notice how the Lord's words, although ignored by their ancestors, were powerful and true (v. 6).

The Lord and His work and His presence continue moving like an eternal flowing river. The Lord is graciously and compassionately explaining this to them, with the explicit instruction: Return to Me. The clear message: Return to me and I will return to you (v. 3); Turn from your evil ways and your evil practices (v. 4).

The Israelites had allowed their fear of foreign nations to stop their temple rebuilding project. The Israelites, overly influenced by fear, then occupied their time, money and passions with home construction projects, their families and their jobs. Then the Israelites' spiritual laziness became their normal life. They exchanged the faithful adherence to the Lord's instructions for their personal comforts. And the Lord, through Zechariah, says, return to me, turn from your evil ways. This is the first step if we want to align our efforts with the power of the Spirit.

After the Israelites hear God's message, they respond in the second half of verse 6.

**"Then they repented and said, 'The LORD Almighty has done to us what our ways and practices deserve, just as he determined to do'" (v. 1: 6b).**

As you think about the Lord's words "return to me" and the Israelites response of repentance, is the Lord saying, "return to me" to you this morning? Think of it this way—do you have any questionable habits? If so, "returning to the Lord" would involve you turning away from these habits.

Although this first step makes no tangible step toward building the temple, it is the first step the Lord instructs. Whatever our failed project, the first step is to return to the Lord. Whatever our failed relationship, the first step is to return to the Lord. Whatever our doubt, our frustrations, our personal struggles, the first step is to return to the Lord.

I've been praying this week for all of us. Praying that the Spirit would reveal areas of rebellion and sin and laziness and doubt to each of us. And He's been faithful to reveal Himself to me. I've heard His voice saying "return to me" this past week.

I was growing frustrated with things that were not happening. Steps toward resolution were not being made, primarily by other people. Something wouldn't go the right way so I'd adapt and try again. Another obstacle—adapt. Another obstacle—adapt and push. Each time, my focus shifted more and more to the obstacles and less and less on the Lord. I was getting frustrated.

Wednesday I was in the In & Out drive-thru waiting on my burger, unsettled with frustration, when these words came on my car stereo:

*The splendor of the King  
Clothed in Majesty  
Let all the earth rejoice, all the earth rejoice  
He wraps Himself in light  
Darkness tries to hide  
And trembles at his voice, trembles at his voice*

*How great is our God, sing with me  
How great is our God  
And all will see, how great, how great is our God*

As I sat in my car, I felt the Spirit of the Lord say to me, "Return to me, Shawn. Bring your concerns to me. Load me down with your burdens. Confess your distracted focus. Stop trying to resolve this in your own might and power. Focus on me." And in that moment, I humbly returned to the Lord.

Nothing had changed with my unresolved situation. Just like with the Israelites, nothing had changed with their temple construction project. Yet, a heart change is always the right first step.

Is your heart right with the Lord this morning? As I've been talking, has the Spirit been revealing to you something to confess, something to change? This is our first step toward aligning ourselves with the powerful movement of the Spirit. This idea is found throughout scripture. *"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal"* (1 Cor. 4:18).

All of our problems, challenges, failures and projects are temporary. It doesn't mean they aren't important, it just means they aren't as important as a right relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ. The Lord Almighty was reminding the Israelites of this. Your first priority should always be me—Return to Me.

#### **Do your part: complete the temple construction**

**This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Now hear these words, 'Let your hands be strong so that the temple may be built.' This is also what the prophets said who were present when the foundation was laid for the house of the LORD Almighty (8:9).**

The time was **now** for the Israelites to do their part. Lay bricks, spread mortar and construct with wood. This message came to them right before the harvest, revealing the principle that anything we work on for the Lord will involve sacrifice. Obedience to do our part is rarely convenient. Doing our part to build the kingdom of God rarely lines up with our schedules. Sacrifice is involved in building anything great.

Since we aren't working on a temple construction project, we need to ask, what's the equivalent for us? God isn't calling us to rebuild a temple for Him today. So answer this: what did the temple represent? The temple represented God's presence on the earth. Why did there need to be a temple? There needed to be a

temple because it was the core of God's Kingdom. His love radiated from the temple; His justice, truth, mercy, righteousness, glory radiated out from the temple. Any Kingdom-spreading work started at the temple.

So today, instead of **building** a temple, each Christian **is** the temple. His love, truth, mercy, righteousness and glory radiates from us! We are supposed to be giving every breath of our lives to building and spreading the Kingdom of God.

What kingdom-spreading activity does He want us to join? What is our part today? Here are some ideas for you to consider:

- » Serving in a ministry here at CPC
- » Joining the 100 at the Sunday 4:00 worship service
- » Joining the South Campus
- » Praying regularly, whether by yourself or with friends
- » Soaking in the Word
- » Leading a Bible Study
- » Raising godly kids
- » Doing whatever it takes to build a Christ-centered marriage
- » Providing Biblical accountability to friends
- » Showing that difficult person the grace and forgiveness of Jesus
- » Telling the truth, regardless of the consequences
- » Telling others why you believe in Jesus Christ
- » Giving money to churches and missionaries and those in financial need
- » Buying clean water
- » World Wide Fistula Fund
- » Writing a song about God

You and I were not saved from our sin for our personal benefit only. We were saved—meaning we were made the temple of God—in order to spread the Kingdom of God.

What about you and me? What are we doing to build and spread God's Kingdom? Each of us shows whether we respect the Spirit or disrespect the Spirit by our level of activity. But it's not normal activity; it's submissive activity. Submissive activity is a mindset that it is actually the Lord who is accomplishing the work as we do our part. We respect the Spirit by saying "yes" to Him and doing our part—being submissively active. Which brings us to the third way we respect the power of the Spirit.

### **Let the Spirit take you where He is already going**

The majority of this book covers this theme: The Spirit is moving, like a mighty river, in great power and strength. Take encouragement from this to do your part and praise God as you enjoy the ride.

**This is what the LORD says: "I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City, and the mountain of the LORD Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain." This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each of them with cane in hand because of their age. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there" (8:3–5).**

Zechariah is describing a time of peace, prosperity and spiritual purity. The Israelites were going to build one building—the temple—and God was going to transform the city and the region. That's the significant work that will take place. The message to the Israelites was, do your part . . . Let Me take you along with me to where I'm already going.

**Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey (9:9).**

This is referring to Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Great and Perfect King of the Lord's people.

**"Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey'" (Matt. 21:5).**

Zechariah is telling the people that God is going to send a righteous and victorious King. They can't do anything to produce this kind of King. Sure, they have a small part to play, but the Lord is doing the significant work. The message to the Israelites was, do your part . . . Let Me take you along with me to where I'm already going.

**Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights on a day of battle. On that day there will be neither sunlight nor cold, frosty darkness. It will be a unique day—a day known only to the LORD—with no distinction between day and night. When evening comes, there will be light. On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it east to the Dead Sea and half of it west to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and in winter. The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name (14:3, 6–9).**

"the Lord will go out and fight ..." (v. 3)

"neither sunlight nor darkness" (v. 6)

"only the Lord knows the day" (v. 7)

"the Lord will be king" (v. 9)

No person can accomplish any of this. It is the Lord alone. At the end of time, the Lord will reign over everyone, everywhere. There will no longer be disobedience. There will no longer be

stubborn refusal to submit to Him. That's where God, through His servant King Jesus, is going. That's where God's Kingdom is going.

You and I show our respect to the Spirit by humbly doing our part and letting God take us along with Him to where He's already going.

The encouragement to us here is that these grand visions of the Lord's future kingdom are given to the struggling and failing Israelites. I can relate to that! Zechariah's message is given to them to inspire them to return to the Lord and faithfully do their part. Yes, their part is only a small part of the Lord's overall plan. But it's the exact part the Lord wants them to give their lives to.

There is always the option before us to either respect or disrespect the Spirit. When we respect Him we get in the right position, do our part, and let the Spirit take us where He is already going. When we disrespect Him we ignore Him, live lives according to whatever priorities we choose, and over-inflate our opinions of ourselves and our activity.

Zechariah's message is clear. The glorious Kingdom of God will be built—with us or without us.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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