

Return to Me #1

The Man Among the Myrtle Trees

Word

Scripture Reference

Zechariah 1:1-17

Discussion Questions

1. Why do some Christians run away from God? What do you think would make them return to Him?
2. Read Zechariah 1:1-17. Zechariah was a prophet and priest whose ministry was to encourage the Israelites to continue rebuilding the temple. He was born in Babylon during the exile and returned to Jerusalem as a young man when King Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon and decreed that captives in exile could return to Jerusalem. The reconstruction of the temple had been halted for many years and Zechariah, along with the prophet Haggai, battled the Israelites' spiritual apathy. What caused the Israelite's lack of interest on spiritual matters? Discuss how you can avoid falling into spiritual indifference.
3. Zechariah began by telling the Israelites that God was very angry with their forefathers (v. 2), but that in spite of His anger, God wanted the Israelites to "return to Him and He will return to them," (v. 3), offering an invitation to start a covenant relationship with Him. Why was God angry? What was God's warning to the people in verses 4-5? Discuss the effects of parents' sin on their children. What could be done to break the consequence or the bad influence of parents' sins and mistakes on the next generation? What happens when people return to their senses and turn back to God (v. 6)?
4. God watches over the world (v. 7-10). To encourage His people to return to Him, God gave Zechariah eight visions. What was the first vision (v. 8)? Who was standing among the myrtle trees, a tree that is

always green and represents future blessings, the return of Jesus (v. 10)? What were the riders who were representing God's angelic messengers doing? Knowing that God watches over you, what comes to your mind? Discuss.

5. "Do you still care about me?" is the big question you may ask God in times of trouble. What was the condition of Israel, compared to the rest of the world, as reported by the riders to the Angel of the Lord (v. 11)? Who is the Angel of the Lord? What did He tell the Lord of Hosts after He heard the reports of the angelic messengers (v. 12)?
6. Two principles that assure God cares about you (v. 13-17).
 - (a) God is jealous of you. His jealousy is not the selfish, human kind, but refers to careful concern. It is a jealousy that will not allow those who rightfully belong to Him to be in the hands of another. Because God is jealous of you, Jesus Christ died on the cross for you. Share how knowing that you rightfully belong to God helps you deal with difficulties in your life.
 - (b) God keeps His promises. He does because He is alive; He is not dead (v. 16-17). What did God promise to the Israelites? When you go through a time of disillusionment, what promises from His Word do you claim?

Walk

God is not dead. He is alive and He remains in control. He conquered death; what is there to be afraid of? He knows what's happening in your life. He is jealous of you and He keeps His promises. God cares deeply about you. How you live your life says a lot about the God you believe in. How do you live your life in relation to Him? If you have doubts in your heart or have been staying away from God, would you accept His invitation to return to Him?

Worship & Prayer

Father, I am a wayward child that keeps on straying away from You. Every sin I commit, every guilty feeling I have, they push me further away; but You never get tired of inviting me back. Thank You, God, for caring deeply for me. For being faithful. For being loving and gracious and merciful. For keeping Your promises, for being in control. Forgive me, Lord, and help me return to You. I open my heart, Lord. Change me to be a person who reflects the kind of God You are. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.