

We have finished our study of Zechariah's 10 visions that the LORD of hosts gave him in one night. He received "the word of the Lord" in Nov 520 BC as recorded in Chapter 1: 1-7. Then one night three months later in February 519 BC, Zechariah received the ten visions.

"In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet" (Zechariah 1:1).

"And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu" (Zechariah 7:1).

Now, almost two years have passed since Zechariah's visions. The temple is almost complete. The surrounding peoples knew the completion of the temple was in sight. Men from Bethel came to Jerusalem for answers to their questions about fasting. They had created fasts to mark certain events and one was the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Now that the temple was almost rebuilt they wanted to ask the priests in Jerusalem if they needed to continue with their fasts. Zechariah, who was both a prophet and priest, was given a prophecy to answer their question.

**1. Let's recall the reason why a delegation of men from Bethel even existed.**

- A.** Israel began as one Kingdom under King Saul, their first king, but later divided into two Kingdoms. After the period of the Judges who ruled over Israel, the people wanted a King to be like the other nations. Israel remained one kingdom under King Saul, King David and his son King Solomon. However King Solomon did not keep the covenant and statues which God had commanded so...
- B.** **When Solomon died in 931 BC God divided Israel**, which had all 12 Tribes, between the son of Solomon's servant **Jeroboam** (10 tribes), and the son of Solomon, **Rehoboam** (2 tribes: Judah, Benjamin). Jeroboam was king in the northern kingdom of Israel. Bethel is located in the northern kingdom. Rehoboam was king in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Jerusalem is located in the southern kingdom of Judah.
- C.** **King Jeroboam devised a plan to keep worship in the northern kingdom of Israel.** He made two calves of gold and placed one in Bethel and the other in Dan. King Jeroboam wanted the southern kingdom of Judah to return to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He wanted to rule over all 12 tribes of Israel. King Jeroboam was also afraid that if his people, those Jews in the Northern Kingdom, traveled to Jerusalem to worship that they would end up turning away from him (Jeroboam) and turning to Rehoboam, the king of Judah where Jerusalem was located. To keep this from happening he created a place for his people in the Northern Kingdom of Israel to worship. This is why he placed a golden calf in Bethel and a second one in Dan.



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This was in disobedience to the LORD because Jerusalem is the true place of worship where the priests who were from the tribe of Levi served in the temple of Jerusalem.

**2. The delegation from Bethel and their questions...Zechariah's prophecy gives the answers**

"When they sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD. And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?" (Zechariah 7: 2-5).

- A. The delegation was a group of men led by Sherezer and Regemmelech** who came down from Bethel to get their questions answered by the priests at the temple in Jerusalem. They wanted to know if they should continue certain fasts which they had observed during the seventy years of captivity. Now when the exiles returned, they went to the home town of their tribe. Some of these tribes came from the area north of the Sea of Galilee in part of the past Northern kingdom of Israel. This explains why they came to Jerusalem which is located in Judah, the Southern kingdom of Israel.

*We must consider that...*

- B. God did not command these fasts that they had been following.** The Jewish people instituted these fasts to mark key dates in the tragic fall of Jerusalem and Judah. These fasts had become rituals. During their seventy year captivity in Babylon they observed these fasts, but now that they were home and the temple in Jerusalem was being rebuilt, they wondered if they needed to continue. Was it okay if they stopped these fasts is the question they asked the priests in Jerusalem.

*These are the fasts they were observing...*

Month	Reason	Scripture
4 <sup>th</sup> month	Mourning the capture of Jerusalem	Jeremiah 52:6-30 esp verse 6 Describes the event and gives the month.
5 <sup>th</sup> month	The burning of Jerusalem and the destruction of Solomon's temple	2Kings 25:2-10 esp. verse 8 Describes the event and gives the month.
7 <sup>th</sup> month	The assassination of Gedaliah, Judah's Governor, and the massacre of 80 men	Jeremiah 41:1-10 esp verses 1-4 Describes the event and gives the month.
10 <sup>th</sup> month	The beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem	2Kings 25:1 Describes the event and gives the month.

"And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?" Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain? (Zechariah 7:6-7).

- C. Speaking to all the people of the land the LORD of hosts gave his admonishment:** You were not mourning over your sins when you fasted during the seventy years of captivity nor did you mourn the sins Judah had committed against the LORD. Rather, you mourned over what you had lost. You mourned about the good life you missed when Jerusalem was prosperous in a time of plenty. You ignored repeated warnings from the prophets of the LORD to turn from your sins because you enjoyed a life of plenty. You only went through the motions and your fasts had become a ritual.

*Let's take a moment to consider if we should mourn over our past tragedies...*

- While we don't erase tragedies from our memory, Scripture tells us to let those things remain in the past and to focus on our future in Christ.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

*Returning to the Jews and the LORD of hosts admonishment...*

- D. The LORD of hosts ends his admonishment with a warning:** So now I give you this warning to obey: make honest judgments, be kind and merciful to everyone, both strangers and relatives. Don't make life difficult for the widows, those without fathers, or the poor and strangers. Do these things from your heart.

"And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart" (Zechariah 7:8-10).

- E. After hearing the warning from the LORD of hosts this was the response from the people:**

"But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 7:11-12).

- "refused to hearken" They did not pay attention or try to understand what was being said to them. They heard the words but it "went in one ear and out the other". Hearken means: listen to and give attention to what is said, to obey and comply with what is said.
- "pulled away the shoulder" They did not want to have anything to do with what Zechariah said. They had decided to only do what they wanted to do. Their body said "Leave me alone, go away!"
- "stopped their ears" They heard the sound of the words but they kept themselves from actually thinking about what he said. Like a child who puts a finger in each ear acting like they can't hear.
- "made their hearts as an adamant stone" Nothing Zechariah said to them touched their heart. They had made a firm decision to not to even consider anything that he said. Much like that defiant look on the face of a rebellious child!



**F. In response to their reaction to his warning the LORD of hosts had a great wrath against them...**

The people did not listen to him, so the LORD did not listen to them when they cried to him.

"Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts: But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate" (Zechariah 7:13-14).

- For example, Nebuchadnezzar was God's servant whom he used to punish Judah. He took the Jews captive to Babylon and destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in 586 BC. The Assyrians were God's servant to punish Israel in 722 BC when they over ran them and took most of the 10 tribes captive; scattering them among nations. Zechariah's prophecy was a reminder to these Jewish exiles of the consequences of not heeding the warnings of the LORD of hosts.

*However...one Day God will do something very special with Israel's heart...*

"And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God" (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

- All Israel will walk in obedience to God, they will be his people and he will be their God. He will remove their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. A heart that honors and obeys their God and he will give them a new spirit.

***The LORD of hosts expresses his love and commitment to his people Israel and reminds them of their glorious future!***

"Again the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury" (Zechariah 8:1-2).

"God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies" (Nahum 1:2).

- The LORD of hosts is protective of Zion because he wants only the very best for her. His jealousy is only for her good; unlike man's jealousy which at its core is self-serving. The LORD knows that Zion does not fully grasp the dangers of participating in the activities of His enemies. He will take revenge on those who harm her and they will not succeed in their evil plans to destroy her.

***The word of the LORD reminded the Jewish exiles of their glorious future in the millennial kingdom on earth. This gave them hope to press on in their work of building the temple. (Zechariah 8:3-8)***

**3. The many joys of the Millennial Kingdom of heaven on earth...**The following are ten joys...

1. The Lord will return to Zion and will dwell in Jerusalem. His kingdom is established with judgment and with justice upon the throne of David.
2. His reign will never end.
3. The Lord Jesus Christ will have authority or dominion over all the earth
4. God will bring his people from the east and west countries back to dwell in Jerusalem

5. *Jerusalem will be a city of truth and it will be holy*. The earth will be "full of the knowledge of the LORD".
6. Jesus Christ will judge with righteousness. Judgment for the wicked will be swift "with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked"
7. Peace will never end. Old men and old women will be safe to walk around the city. Children will be playing in the streets. So all ages will mix and live around each other.
8. There will be peace among the animal kingdom and the fear of man will be lifted. Animals will no longer harm other animals or people. Animals will not eat other animals for food. They will eat plants (straw, etc).
9. All flesh will come to worship before the LORD
10. No one will escape or hide from giving Jesus Christ worship. His enemies will grovel before him.

**4. The LORD of hosts gives his expectations for those Jewish exiles who have returned from Babylon**

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built. For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour" (Zechariah 8:9-10).

"Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them" (Ezra 5:1).

- A. Through his prophets Zechariah and Haggai the LORD of hosts urged the exiles to work with strong hands to build the temple.** The LORD had just described the glorious future they will have in the kingdom of heaven on earth. God has assured them that he has taken care of their future. This should encourage them to work hard and build the temple.
- a. "These days": apparently, the economy wasn't good so there was little money to hire men and unemployment was high. People were on edge with each other due to the "affliction" of an impending famine. God encouraged them to work hard for the temple and trust him because he will take care of their needs.



Today, our economy isn't going well either so just like the Jews we must trust God. He will take care of our needs too!

- B. The LORD encouraged the exiles when he told them the ways he will bless them both now and with the fullness of his blessings when their Messiah reigns in his future kingdom on earth.**  
**In Zechariah 8: 11-17 the LORD tells how he is going to bless the Jews and what he expected...**
- Your crops will grow and flourish because you will have all the rain you need
  - The LORD will save you from the Gentiles

***In the millennial kingdom on earth reigned by Messiah ....***

- Before you were a curse among the Gentiles but the LORD will cause you to be a blessing I will save you from them. You will then be a blessing.

*Let your hands be strong and work hard to build the temple! The LORD punished Israel and Judah when their fathers provoked him but now he is going to bless Jerusalem so do not fear!*

***The LORD expected the following things from the exiles:***

- Treat each other in truth and in peace. Speak in truth and seek peace.
- Do not have evil thoughts in your heart about each other
- Do not take a false oath.
- All these things the LORD hates.

**A reminder for us...**

The Lord God expects the same behavior from us today: "Wherefore putting away lying, **SPEAK EVERY MAN TRUTH WITH HIS NEIGHBOUR:** for we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4:25).

- C. The LORD tells them how he *now* wants them to observe their fasts.** Instead of mourning the LORD of hosts wants them to fast out of joy and gladness. Instead of fasts he wants them to be cheerful feasts. Therefore love the truth and the peace that you are now enjoying! In the past they mourned over the siege, capture, destruction and burning of Jerusalem, and the assassination of their beloved Gedaliah (governor of Judah). That is in the past. Be thankful and cheerful now!

"And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace" (Zechariah 8:18-19).

- D. During the Millennial Kingdom of heaven on earth the Gentiles seek out the Jews.** People from different cities will come together and travel to Jerusalem solely to pray before the LORD and they will look for Jews from whom they can learn about the LORD. The Gentiles will know that the LORD is with the Jew. The Gentiles will be drawn to the light of the Jews!

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zechariah 8:20-23).

"And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isaiah 60:3).

We close with...

*"...and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth..."* (Zechariah 8:3). What a beautiful thing this will be! Just think: The Lord Jesus Christ will receive all the glory he is due and men will speak the truth!