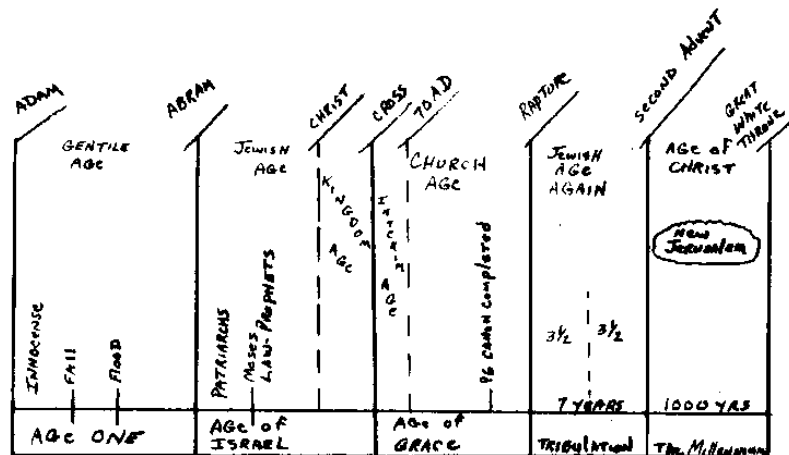


ZECHARIAH CHAPTER SEVEN

Zechariah Lesson 63-

Lesson 63

1. Last week I completed the exegesis of Zec 6:15 and when time expired we were about to analyze chapter seven.



2. Let's start with an expanded translation of Zechariah chapter six.

Zec 6:1 And then I lifted up my eyes and there I saw four war chariots flying between Mount Moriah and the Mount of Olives. Their mission was one of judging and destroying the nations who had abused Israel.

Zec 6:2 The first chariot representing war was harnessed to several red horses and the second chariot representing famine and death was harnessed to several black horses.

Zec 6:3 Harnessed to the third chariot were white horses representing military victory and harnessed to the fourth chariot representing blood and catastrophe were spotted red horses, the latter being active, fleet and vigorous.

Zec 6:4 I then said to the angel who had earlier spoken with me. "What are these my lord?"

Zec 6:5 And then the angel answered saying "these four chariots are the four spirits of the heavens going out from the Third Heaven where they have been standing before the Lord of the entire earth. The Spirits have come from heaven to destroy those nations who gathered at Megiddo in opposition to Israel.

Zec 6:6 The war chariots pulled by the black and white horses are seen going north while the paint horses are seen going south toward Egypt.

Zec 6:7 And all of the high spirited horses were eager to continue their work of judgment; and then they were commanded by the Lord of the whole earth to go forth and walk all around and about the earth ensuring stability and peace."

Zec 6:8 And then the interpreting angel at the command of the Lord Jesus Christ cried out to me saying "now look at those ministering spirits who have gone north; in the land of the north they have destroyed Israel's enemies, vengeance is now Mine."

Zec 6:9 And then the Word of the Lord Jehovah again came to me.

Zec 6:10 "You must welcome back from captivity Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah and then I want you to take them and their gifts to the home of Josiah the son of Zephaniah.

Zec 6:11 Take the silver and gold and make two crowns and then I want you to set them on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the High Priest.

Zec 6:12 The Lord of the Armies, the Father then said to me: "Say this to Joshua; the High Priest "behold The Messiah, the Christ, Who is called the Branch; He shall grow out of poverty and obscurity to build the Temple of the Lord.

Zec 6:13 At His Second Advent Christ shall build His Temple upon a high and glorious mountain; and His Shekinah glory shall be seen by all; He shall sit in His Temple and rule over both Israel and the Nations and shall be both Priest and King over the entire earth; His Kingdom will be One of prosperity and perfect environment.

Zec 6:14 The crowns given by Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah and Hen to Joshua are to be placed in the soon to be completed Temple as a memorial to the coming Messiah.

Zec 6:15 Both Jew and gentile shall come from far away and aid in the building of the Lord's Millennial Temple; and by these events Israel shall know that the Father, the Lord of the Armies has sent Me the Messiah to you. And this will all come to pass in your age if you keep on paying attention and concentrate on My Word.

3. The crowning of Joshua is a postscript to the night visions, the crowning is not a vision, but a symbolic act.

4. In c. 520 B.C. three men had come as a deputation from Babylon with a gift from the exiles for the completion of the Temple which was under construction.

5. Though the visions and symbolic crownings have a near term application for Israel of Zechariah's day; from hindsight we know they did not "clean up their act" and become the light of the world welcoming Christ at His First Advent but in fact they became worse and not better even crucifying the Lord when He came; therefore all application moves from "the near term to the future."

6. Zechariah is to take the silver and the gold and make two crowns for Joshua the High Priest. Joshua will not keep the crowns but will return them to the Temple as a memorial.

7. The memorial is to Jesus Christ who will one day return and wear both crowns, i.e., a crown of political leadership and a crown of spiritual leadership. The return of the Messiah shall once and for all corroborate God's Word.

8. The Messiah will establish the truth of God's word by fulfilling the promises to Israel. The divine covenants and promises made to Israel in the Old Testament will be most assuredly fulfilled. The Messiah shall demand and receive absolute and total obedience to His Word. Such obedience will bring great blessing, just as it does today Deu 28:1-8.

9. The crowns are ordered by Zechariah to be held in the Temple as a memorial of the Messiah's return. According to Jewish tradition the crowns were hung in the highest

windows of Nehemiah's Temple.

10. Moreover, writes Unger there is no reason to doubt Jewish tradition here. Certainly the memorial was made and placed in the Temple and had a long and fruitful ministry of reminding the people of the important typical and prophetic event ... looking forward to the fruition of these visions in the eventual crowning of the Messiah as the Millennial King-Priest ...

11. As the Lord's supper is a memorial to show forth the Lord's death till He come. The crown in the Temple had a similar function.

12. Now let's see what we can learn from chapter seven.

13. We need to first get an outline of the chapter seven.

Outline

I. The question of the fasts is broached.

A. Zechariah receives a divine revelation anticipating the coming delegation and their question.

Zec 7:1 In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, the month of Kislev.

B. The city of Bethel sends a delegation of inquiry.

Zec 7:2 The people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-Melech, together with their men, to entreat the LORD

C. The subject of the inquiry is made known.

Zec 7:3 by asking the priests of the house of the LORD Almighty and the prophets, "Should I mourn and fast in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?"

II. The selfishness of their question is exposed.

A. The rebuke of meaningless ritual.

Zec 7:4 Then the word of the LORD Almighty came to me:

Zec 7:5 "Ask all the people of the land and the priests, "When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted?"

Zec 7:6 And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves?

B. There is an explanation to heed the Word of God.

Zec 7:7 Are these not the words the LORD proclaimed through the earlier prophets when Jerusalem and its surrounding towns were at rest and prosperous, and the Negev and the western foothills were settled?"

III. The call to repentance is announced.

A. The divine call to put the Word of God into practice.

Zec 7:8 And the word of the LORD came again to Zechariah:

Zec 7:9 "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.

Zec 7:10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other."

B. The refusal of the pre-exilic Jews to obey the Word of God is reviewed.

Zec 7:11 "But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and stopped up their ears.

Zec 7:12 They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry.

C. The results of their refusal are revisited.

Zec 7:13 "'When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen,' says the LORD Almighty.

Zec 7:14 'I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations, where they were strangers. The land was left so desolate behind them that no one could come or go. This is how they made the pleasant land desolate."

Now let's see what we can learn from verse one.

KJV

Zec 7:1 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;

NIV

Zec 7:1 In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, the month of Kislev.

Hebrew

Va Hayah - And it came to pass

Be Shanah - in the year

Arva Le Daryavesh - four of Darius

Ha Melech - the King

Davar Yehovah - the Word of the Lord

Hayah - it came

El Zekaryah - to Zechariah

Be Arvah - in the fourth

Le Ha Chodesh - of the month

Ha Tesheii - the ninth

Be Kiselev - Kiselev

Working Translation

Zec 7:1 And then in the 4th year of King Darius it happened that the Word of Jehovah came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month called Kiselev.

Principles

1. The year is 518 B.C. when on 4 December Zechariah is given another divine revelation.
2. He is told a delegation is coming from Bethel to inquire if they should continue to hold a certain lamentation fast.



3. There were four fasts related to the destruction of Jerusalem. The four were:

3.1 the fast of the fifth month (August) - commemorating the events described in 2Ki 25:9 and Jer 52:13 recalling the burning of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.;

2Ki 25:9 He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down.

Jer 52:13 He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down.

3.2 the fast of the fourth month (July) - commemorating the events described in Jer 39:2-4 and 2Ki 25:3 recalling the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem and the spread of famine;

Jer 39:2 And on the ninth day of the fourth month of Zedekiah's eleventh year, the city wall was broken through.

Jer 39:3 Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came and took seats in the Middle Gate: Nergal-Sharezer of Samgar, Nebo-Sarsekim a chief officer, Nergal-Sharezer a high official and all the other officials of the king of Babylon.

Jer 39:4 When Zedekiah king of Judah and all the soldiers saw them, they fled; they left the city at night by way of the king's garden, through the gate between the two walls, and headed toward the Arabah.

2Ki 25:3 By the ninth day of the fourth month the famine in the city had become so severe that there was no food for the people to eat.

3.3 the fast of the seventh month (October) commemorating the events described in Jer 41:1-18 and 2Ki 25:22-26 recalling the murder of Gedaliah;

Jer 41:1 In the seventh month Ishmael son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, who was of royal blood and had been one of the king's officers, came with ten men to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah. While they were eating together there,

Jer 41:2 Ishmael son of Nethaniah and the ten men who were with him got up and struck down Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, with the sword, killing the one whom the king of Babylon had appointed as governor over the land.

Jer 41:3 Ishmael also killed all the Jews who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah, as well as the Babylonian soldiers who were there.

Jer 41:4 The day after Gedaliah's assassination, before anyone knew about it,

Jer 41:5 eighty men who had shaved off their beards, torn their clothes and cut themselves came from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria, bringing grain offerings and incense with them to the house of the LORD.

Jer 41:6 Ishmael son of Nethaniah went out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he went. When he met them, he said, "Come to Gedaliah son of Ahikam."

Jer 41:7 When they went into the city, Ishmael son of Nethaniah and the men who were with him slaughtered them and threw them into a cistern.

Jer 41:8 But ten of them said to Ishmael, "Don't kill us! We have wheat and barley, oil and honey, hidden in a field." So he let them alone and did not kill them with the others.

2Ki 25:22 Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son

of Shaphan, to be over the people he had left behind in Judah.

2Ki 25:23 When all the army officers and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah--Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, Jaazaniah the son of the Maacathite, and their men.

2Ki 25:24 Gedaliah took an oath to reassure them and their men. "Do not be afraid of the Babylonian officials," he said. "Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you."

2Ki 25:25 In the seventh month, however, Ishmael son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, who was of royal blood, came with ten men and assassinated Gedaliah and also the men of Judah and the Babylonians who were with him at Mizpah.

2Ki 25:26 At this, all the people from the least to the greatest, together with the army officers, fled to Egypt for fear of the Babylonians.

3.4 and the fast of the tenth month (January) commemorating the events described in Jer 39:1 and 2Ki 25:1 recalling the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem in 586.

Jer 39:1 In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army and laid siege to it.

2Ki 25:1 So in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. He encamped outside the city and built siege works all around it.

4. Each fast day was named after the month in which it was celebrated.

5. Let me give you a summary of the Hebrew Calendar:

HEBREW RELIGIOUS CALENDAR

Nisan or Abib = March - April

Iyyar or Ziv = April - May

Sivan = May - June

Tammuz = June - July

Ab = July - August

Elul = August - September

Tishri or Ethanim = September - October

Marchesvan or Bul = October - November

Kislev or Kislev = November - December

Tebeth = December - January

Shebat = January - February

Adar = February - March

5.1 About every six years, an extra month (second Adar, or leap month) was added

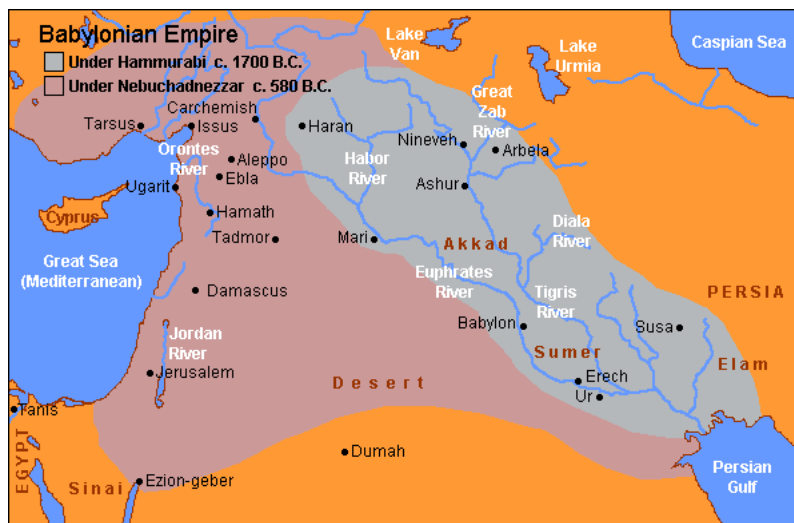
because the calendar was based on the moon instead of the sun.

6. In all four fasts they put on sack cloth and performed acts of other overt self-abasement such as open display of grief and humiliation such as weeping and wailing while openly fasting.

7. The citizens of Bethel thought it appropriate to find out if they should continue given the new Temple was almost completed and Jews were in the land.

8. The fast day Festivals listed above together with Purim (held on the 14th day of Adar) to celebrate the victory of Esther and Mordecai over Haman were festivals celebrated but not commanded in the Law of Moses.

9. In order to better identify this Darius we need to review the Pertinent rulers of the Medes and the Persians with brief comment. I have highlighted the comments pertinent to the Bible i. e. where an individual or his reign has Biblical significance.



9.1 Medes

9.1.1 Cyaxares I (an ally of Nabopolassar of Chaldea against the Assyrian Empire).

9.1.2 Astyages, son of Cyaxares I and grandfather of Cyrus the Great of Persia.

9.1.3 Mandane, daughter of Astyages, married Cambyses I of Anshan, mother of Cyrus the Great of Persia.

9.1.4 Cyaxares II, son of Astyages. Also known in history as Darius the Mede (began as a ruler of Babylon in c. B.C. 539 under Cyrus the Great). Dan 5:31 and 9:1).

Dan 5:31 And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

Dan 9:1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;

9.2 Persians

9.2.1 Achaemenes

9.2.2 Teispes, the Great King, King of Anshan

9.2.3 Cyrus I

9.2.4 Cambyses I, married Mandane, daughter of Astyages of Media.

9.2.5 Cyrus II (549-530), known as Cyrus the Great, King of Anshan and King of Persia.

9.2.6 Cambyses II (529-522)

9.2.7 Pseudo-Smerdis, the usurper (522-521).

9.2.8 Darius I (521-486), known as Darius Hystaspes or Darius the Great; great, great, grandson of Teispes through Ariaramnes, younger brother of Cyrus I. This made him the great great grandnephew of Cyrus the Great. Darius began the failed attempt to defeat the Greeks in 499, however Persia was soundly defeated in 490. Esther was still a Hebrew slave and had not yet been crowned Miss Persia.

9.2.9 Xerxes I (486-465), the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther. He resumed the war against the Greeks in 480, only to be soundly defeated at Mycale near Miletus in 479. He retired to Susa where he would soon remove Vashti and replace her with Esther.

9.2.10 Artaxerxes I (465-424), also known as Artaxerxes Longimanus (Ezr 7:1-8; Neh 2:1)

Ezr 7:1 Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah ...

Ezr 7:6 This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.

Ezr 7:7 And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and Temple servants, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king.

Neh 2:1 And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence.

Neh 2:2 Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid,

9.2.11 Xerxes II (424)

9.2.12 Darius II (423-404) was probably Darius the Persian mentioned in Neh 12:22.

Neh 12:22 The family heads of the Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan and Jaddua, as well as those of the priests, were recorded in the reign of Darius the Persian.

9.2.13 Artaxerxes II (404-359)

9.2.14 Artaxerxes III (359-338)

9.2.15 Darius III (338-331), last Persian king defeated by Alexander.

10. It is time to take a look at an expanded translation of Zec 7:1.

Expanded Translation

Zec 7:1 And then in the 4th year of King Darius on the 4th of December 518 B. C. the Word of the Lord came to Zechariah.

11. Now let's see what can learn from verse two.

KJV

Zec 7:2 When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD,

NIV

Zec 7:2 The people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-Melech, together with their men, to entreat the Lord,

End Lesson Taught 7-21-2004

Zechariah Lesson 64

1. Last week I completed the exegesis of Zechariah chapter six, taught an introduction to chapter seven and exegeted Zec 7:1. When time expired I was about to begin an analysis of Zec 7:2.

2. Let's start with an expanded translation of Zec 7:2.

Zec 7:1 And then in the 4th year of King Darius on the 4th of December 518 B. C. the Word of the Lord came to Zechariah.

3. I want to review some of that learned and then pick up with new material on page two where we were reviewing the Hebrew of Zec 7:2.

4. The year is 518 B.C. when on 4 December Zechariah is given another divine revelation.

5. He is told a delegation is coming from Bethel to inquire if they should continue to hold a certain lamentation fast.

6. There were four fasts related to the destruction of Jerusalem. The four were:

6.1 the fast of the fifth month (August) - commemorating the events described in 2Ki 25:9 and Jer 52:13 recalling the burning of Jeruslaem in 586 B.C.;

6.2 the fast of the fourth month (July) - commemorating the events described in Jer 39:2-4 and 2Ki 25:3 recalling the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem and the spread of famine;

6.3 the fast of the seventh month (October) commemorating the events described in Jer 41:1-18 and 2Ki 25:22-26 recalling the murder of Gedaliah;

6.4 and the fast of the tenth month (January) commemorating the events described in Jer 39:1 and 2Ki 25:1 recalling the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem in 586.

7. The citizens of Bethel thought it appropriate to find out if they should continue given the new Temple was almost completed and Jews were in the land.

8. The fast day Festivals listed above together with Purim were festivals celebrated but not commanded in the Law of Moses.

9. Now let's return to our study of verse two.

KJV

Zec 7:2 When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezzer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD,

NIV

Zec 7:2 The people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-Melech, together with their men, to entreat the LORD

Hebrew
Va Shalach - And sent
Beth-El - Bethel
Sharetser - Sharezer
Va Regem Melech - and Regem the King
Va Anash Yn - and his men
Le Chalah - to beseech
Eth Peh - the face
Yehovah - of the Lord

Working Translation: And Bethel sent to the house of the Lord Sharezer and Regem the King and his men to ask before the Lord.

Principles

1. Bethel is a city in the southern part of Israel, evidently in the vicinity of Ziklag. Probably Bethel and Bethuel are names by which it was known (1Sa 30:27; 1Ch 4:30). Its site is not currently identified.

1Sa 30:26 When David arrived in Ziklag, after defeating the Amalekites, he sent some of the plunder to the elders of Judah, who were his friends, saying, "Here is a present for you from the plunder of the LORD'S enemies."

1Sa 30:27 He sent it to those who were in Bethel, Ramoth Negev and Jattir;

1Ch 4:27 Shimei (his only claim to fame) had sixteen sons and six daughters, but his brothers did not have many children; so their entire clan (the Simeonites) did not become as numerous as the people of Judah.

1Ch 4:28 They lived in Beersheba, Moladah, Hazar Shual,

1Ch 4:29 Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad,

1Ch 4:30 Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag,

2. Wycliffe writes: A town on the border between Benjamin and Ephraim, about ten miles N of Jerusalem and S of Shiloh near Ai. Originally the city was called Luz.

Gen 12:8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

Gen 12:9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

Gen 28:12 And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

Gen 28:13 And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed ...

Gen 28:19 And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.

3. The town was assigned by the drawing of lots to Benjamin (Jos 18:22).

Jos 18:21 Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho, and Bethhoglah, and the valley of Keziz,
Jos 18:22 And Betharabah, and Zemaraim, and Bethel,

3.1 Afterward, the Ephraimites possessed it (1Ch 7:28).

1Ch 7:28 And the possessions and habitations of the sons of Ephraim were, Bethel and the towns thereof, and eastward Naaran, and westward Gezer, with the towns thereof; Shechem also and the towns thereof, unto Gaza and the towns thereof:

3.2 It was a place of worship (1Sa 10:3).

1Sa 10:1 Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed Saul, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?

1Sa 10:2 When thou art departed from me today, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son?

1Sa 10:3 Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine:

3.3 Samuel judged Israel here as one of the places in his circuit (1Sa 7:16).

1Sa 7:15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

1Sa 7:16 And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

4. Wycliffe writes of Sherezzer and Regemmelech:

SHEREZER

A messenger sent from Bethel to inquire at the temple concerning the day of mourning in the fifth month, a time commemorating the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar ((Zec 7:2). Because the Hebrew text is difficult many have translated it: "Bethel-sharezer sent Regem-melech with his men to seek the favour of the Lord." This suggests that the man's name may originally have been the common Babylonian name Bel-shar-usur (See Belshazzar; Sharezer).

REGEM-MELECH

The name appears in Zec 7:2 where a group of men is sent into the temple to inquire concerning a day of national mourning. It is treated as a proper name in most versions, but there are those who hold that it should be thought of as a descriptive phrase modifying Sherezzer, thus: "Sherezzer, the friend of the king." This is an interesting possibility but unlikely, and it is best to retain the more customary rendering.

5. We know little of Sherezzer and Regem Melech if in fact there were two men.

6. The message to the Priests from the citizens of Bethel: Do we continue the fast of lamentation commemorating the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

6.1 They were also interested (as we shall later see) in whether to continue the other three fasts related to the defeat by Nebuchadnezzar.

7. Now we are ready for an expanded translation of Zec 7:2.

Expanded Translation

Zec 7:2 And the citizens of Bethel sent to the house of the Lord Sherezzer and Regem the King and his men to ask of the Lord whether they were to continue the four fasts.

8. Now let's see what we can learn from Zec 7:3.

KJV

Zec 7:3 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?

NIV

Zec 7:3 by asking the priests of the house of the LORD Almighty and the prophets, "Should I mourn and fast in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?"

Hebrew

Le Amar - To ask

El Kohen - of the Priest

Asher - who are

Le Beth Yehovah - in the house of the Lord

Tsava - of the armies

Va El Ha Navi - and to the prophets

Le Amar - saying

Ha Bakah - should I weep and cry

Be Chodesh - in the month

Ha Chamesh - of the fifth

Nazar - to separate or consecrate or fast
Ke Asher - as that which
Asah - you also did
Zeh Ka Mah - for what these many
Shanah - years?

Working Translation: So they asked of the priests serving around the altar if they should continue the fast of the fifth month as both they and the remnant in Jerusalem had done.

Principles

1. The fast of the fifth month (August) - commemorating the events described in 2Ki 25:9 and Jer 52:13 was a memorial to stimulate memory of the burning of Jerusalem in 586.

2Ki 25:9 He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down.

Jer 52:13 He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down.

2. The question of those coming from Bethel is should we continue to fast in commemoration of the burning of the city? Explicitly stated also is you too have done this so: do we now continue since there is a Temple being finished and prosperity is slowly returning to the Holy City?

3. Given Zec 7:5 we know their question not only included the fifth month fast but also the seventh month.

Zec 7:5 "Ask all the people of the land and the priests,"When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted?

3.1 the fast of the seventh month (October) commemorating the events described in Jer 41:1-18 and 2Ki 25:22-26 was designed to stimulate the memory of the death of Gedaliah;

2Ki 25:22 Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to be over the people he had left behind in Judah.

2Ki 25:23 When all the army officers and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah--Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, Jaazaniah the son of the Maacathite, and their men.

2Ki 25:24 Gedaliah took an oath to reassure them and their men. "Do not be afraid of

the Babylonian officials," he said. "Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you."

Jer 41:2 Ishmael ... and the ten men who were with him got up and struck down Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, with the sword, killing the one whom the king of Babylon had appointed as governor over the land.

3.2 As we are going to see, all four fasts are mentioned in verse nineteen of chapter eight therefore we can assume the question of those who came from Bethel included all exilic memorials.

Zec 8:14 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not:

Zec 8:15 So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.

Zec 8:16 These are the things that ye shall do; Speak Ø ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:

Zec 8:17 And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.

Zec 8:18 And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying,

Zec 8:19 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.

Zec 8:20 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities:

Zec 8:21 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.

Zec 8:22 Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.

Zec 8:23 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.

4. Let's review what the Bible has to say about fasting.

The Doctrine of Fasting

1. Definition and Concept:

1.1 Fasting is the abstinence from food and/or wine either in whole or in part so that a believer can better concentrate on the things of God.

1.2 There is also the mention of fasting in the Scriptures along with the wearing of a

rough sack cloth, ashes and other manifest denigrations of self in order to express personal chagrin, sorrow, repentance, etc.

1.3 Fasting in remembrance of past events such as defeats, calamities, pestilences, etc. are also mentioned in Scripture.

2. Background

2.1 The Gentiles of antiquity often fasted.

2.1.1 In the antiquity men subsisted largely on the spontaneous production of the earth and the spoils of the hunt; and owing to the uncertainty of obtaining food fasting was often compulsory.

2.1.2 This compulsion of fasting was soon interpreted as an expression of divine will and incorporated in many early religions as a duty.

2.1.3 The Gentiles soon concluded the gods were jealous of man and that abstinence could in fact propitiate their favor.

2.1.4 Fasting among the gentiles became a pervasive religious duty.

2.2 Israel also was instructed to fast.

2.2.1 The Hebrew word TSUM meaning to fast is not found in the books of the law, but is often found in the historical books and the books of the prophets. As we will note fasting was however a part of the celebration of the Day of Atonement, the Hebrew word ANAH was used instead of TSUM.

2Sa 12:16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David "fasted", and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.

1Ki 21:12 They proclaimed a "fast" and seated Naboth in a prominent place among the people.

1Ki 21:13 Then two scoundrels came and sat opposite him and brought charges against Naboth before the people, saying, "Naboth has cursed both God and the king." So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death.

1Ki 21:15 As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, "Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite that he refused to sell you. He is no longer alive, but dead."

1Ki 21:16 When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of Naboth's vineyard.

1Ki 21:17 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite:

1Ki 21:18 "Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He is now in Naboth's vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it.

1Ki 21:19 Say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?' Then say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood -- yes, yours!'"

Ezr 8:21 There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a "fast", so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions.

Ezr 8:22 I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, "The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him."

Isa 58:3 Wherefore have we "fasted", say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your "fast" ye find pleasure, and exact all your labors.

Isa 58:4 Behold, ye "fast" for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

Isa 58:5 Is it such a "fast" that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?

2.2.2 The expression used in the books of the law and translated in the KJV "afflicting the soul" is a translation of the Hebrew words ANAH in the piel stem as the verb and NEPHESH as the noun.

Lev 16:29 And this shall be a statute forever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall "afflict your souls," and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you:

Lev 16:30 For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.

Lev 16:31 It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall "afflict your souls," by a statute forever.

Lev 23:27 Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall "afflict your souls", and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

2.2.3 The Jews were required to fast on the Day of the Atonement.

2.3 As Church Age believers we recognize there was a requirement under the Mosaic law to fast however we also recognize the epistles demand we eschew the Mosaic Law and its onerous impositions. There will be a legitimate "fasting" found in the epistles as we will later see.

3. Observances:

3.1 Fasting, along with dust on the head and torn clothers, was often, as in the case of David in 2Sa 12:16, an act of expressing chagrin and sorrow.

2Sa 1:1 After the death of Saul, David returned from defeating the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days.

2Sa 1:2 On the third day a man arrived from Saul's camp, with his clothes torn and with dust on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him honor.

3.2 Ezra proclaims a fast day in order to gain God's protection. Ezr 8:21-23

Ezr 8:21 There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions.

Ezr 8:22 I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, "The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him."

Ezr 8:23 So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.

3.3 Joel urges Israel to fast as part of a solemn repentance in order to avoid the invasion of Judah. Joel 2:15

Joe 2:15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly.

3.4 After the Jews returned to the land they implemented numerous commemorative fasts. Zechariah Chapters 7 and 8

3.5 Fasts were observed in degrees, a single day of fasting meant total abstinence however some might simply abstain from certain food or foods.

4. To express profound mortification fasting was often accompanied with the wearing of the sack cloth, ashes on the head, garments torn, etc.

1Ki 21:23 And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

1Ki 21:24 Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat ...

1Ki 21:27 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and "fasted", and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.

Jon 3:5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

5. In the Law the Day of Atonement was the only fast demanded and was therefore called "the fast."

Acts 27:9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the "fast" was now already past, Paul admonished them,

6. Israel throughout history has fasted when times were especially rough, misfortune, bereavement or when they felt especially sorry for their conduct.

1Sa 1:7 And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.

1Sa 1:8 Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?

1Sa 31:11 And when the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul;

1Sa 31:13 And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

Ezr 10:2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.

Ezr 10:6 Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.

7. As earlier mentioned there were many post-exilic fast days established. For example:

Zec 8:18 And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying,

Zec 8:19 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.

7.1 July 17 was a fast to remember the capture of Jerusalem:

Jer 52:6 And in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land.

Jer 52:7 Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden; (now the Chaldeans were by the city round about:) and they went by the way of the plain.

7.2 On 15 August there was the fast to remember the burning of the Temple: 2Ki 25:8

2Ki 25:8 And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the

nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem:

2Ki 25:9 And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.

7.3 On 7 Oct there was a fast to remember the death of Gedaliah:

Jer 41:3 Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, even with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, and the men of war.

Jer 41:4 And it came to pass the second day after he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew it,

7.4 On 10 January there was a fast to remember the beginning of the attack on Jerusalem:

2Ki 25:1 And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about.

2Ki 25:2 And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

7.5 There was also a special fast to remember Esther going before the King of Persia to plead the cause of her exiled people:

Est 4:16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

8. With the legalism of the Pharisees pervading, the fast became more frequent; the fast became a pious exercise of religiosity. The Pharisees fasted on the second and fifth day of every week.

Mat 9:14 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

Mat 9:15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

Luk 18:12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

Luk 18:13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

9. The early New Testament:

9.1 In the Kingdom Age teachings of the Gospels the Lord did provide for fasting and

often rebuked the Scribes for their hypocritical fasting.

9.1.1 There was a recognition on the part of our Lord that fasting was a part of the Jewish religion.

Mat 6:16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast ...

Mat 9:14 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

Mat 9:15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

9.2 Fasting is mentioned as a mechanic to enforce discipline and concentration in the Gospels and accordingly was said to be a requirement for exorcising certain demons.

Mar 9:28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?

Mar 9:29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

9.3 Mention is made of fasting in the early Church Age or Interim Age as we are prone to call it.

Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

Acts 13:3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Acts 14:20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

Acts 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

9.4 Paul in his early writings to the Church at Corinth in about A.D. 56 speaks of fastings.

1Co 7:5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

2Co 6:5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings;

2Co 11:27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

9.5 It can therefore be concluded that fasting in the early Church Age was a common practice as a means of dedicating the mind to the service of the Lord.

9.6 There is no mention of fasting after 56 A.D., therefore, we can conclude the Canon's completion might have rendered fasting as fait accompli.

10. The Church Age

10.1 In the Church Age the two power options seem to have replaced fasting.

10.2 There is nothing wrong with fasting if indeed it is done to assist in the concentration on the Word.

10.3 In the early Church, Wednesday and Friday were half days of refusing to eat meat in commemoration of Jesus' work during the Passion Week.

10.4 The early Church did this in conformance with the Words of our Lord in Mat 9:15. "Can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast."

10.5 There are some who think that the observance of the Lord's Table also supplanted fasting.

10.6 Since we have no indication of fasting in the later epistles, fasting like baptism is a questionable "ordinance", but then again if fasting helps you to become closer to God then by all means fast.

10.6.1 The major question rests on the interpretation of Mat 9:15 shown above.

End Lesson Taught 7-28-2004

Zechariah Lesson 65

1. Last week I completed the exegesis of Zec 7:2 and 3 and then I taught the Doctrine of Fasting.

2. Let's begin our lesson this morning with an expanded translation of Zec 7:1-3.

Zec 7:1 And then in the 4th year of King Darius on the 4th of December 518 the Word of the Lord came to Zechariah.

Zec 7:2 And the citizens of Bethel sent to the house of the Lord Sherezer and Regem the King and his men to ask of the Lord whether they were to continue the four fasts.

Zec 7:3 So the delegation asked of the prophets and the Temple Priests who served around the altar if they should continue the fast of the fifth month as both they and the remnant in Jerusalem had done for some seventy years.

3. Now let's see what we can learn from Zec 7:4.

KJV

Zec 7:4 Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying,

NIV

Zec 7:4 Then the word of the LORD Almighty came to me:

Hebrew

Va Hayah - Then it came

Davar Yehovah - the Word of The Lord

Tsava - of the armies

El Y - to me

Le Amar - saying

Working Translation: And then the word of the Lord of the armies came to me saying.

Principles

1. This verse is quite straight forward.
2. The verse simply tells us the God of the Universe speaks again to the prophet.
3. The term Lord of the armies as we have previously studied emphasizes the sovereignty and omnipotence of God. The phrase adds power and certainty to what will be said. Now we are ready for verse five.

KJV

Zec 7:5 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?

NIV

Zec 7:5 "Askall the people of the land and the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted?

Hebrew
Amar - Speak
El Kol Am - to all the people
Ha Arets - of the land
Ha Kohen - the priests
Le Amar - saying
Kiy Tsum - because you all fasted
Va Saphad - even while mourning
Be Ha Chemosh - in the fifth
Va Be Shaba - and in the seventh
Va Zeh - and those
Shabuim - seventy
Shanah - years
Ha Tsum Ni - were you fasting
Saphad Ni - and mourning to me
Ani - I or Me or even Me?

Working Translation: Speak to all the priests and the people of the land saying when you fasted and mourned in the fifth and the seventh month, even in those seventy years were you fasting and mourning for Me, really I God!

Principles

1. In verses four through seven the motivation behind the question of those who came from Bethel is exposed.
2. The visit gave rise to several far reaching prophecies dealing with the Israel's future.
3. In fact the predictions of chapters seven and eight constitute similar prophecies found in the eight night visions springing from a historical circumstance and couched in plain language rather than apocalyptic symbols as in the case of the visions.
4. In verse five we find not only a rebuke of the messengers from Bethel but most significantly there is a rebuke of both the people and the priests.
5. Most significant is the rebuke of the priest who were the ones to whom the question was addressed. These men should have known but they didn't because they were part of the problem rather than the solution.
6. For the above reason the Lord gave Zechariah the answer and not the priests. The words of Zechariah constitute a well-deserved rebuke to both the people and the priests, clearly and importantly the rebuke came from the Lord Himself.

7. Zechariah like God's servants today must be careful to administer rebuke where rebuke is needed, but must always be certain that it is by divine direction and not the result of personal pique or selfish animosity.

8. Moreover emphasis on the special revelation of God's word to the prophet in this instance is required by the unfitness of the priest; they were participating in the empty ritualism which will be explicitly indicted.

9. As noted the eight priests should have had the answer. Because they did not have the answer, the prophet receives a divine communication and that is why this feature is emphatically stressed in the account.

10. It should be noted, however that the actual question asked was not the significant issue; the question, according to Zechariah, was a minor issue.

11. The episode recorded, was far reaching and symptomatic, of a deeper problem of attitude and the barometer of a serious evil that was beginning to infest the entire nation - that manifestation is a pervading rejection of grace.

11.1 The single demon of idolatry was soon to be replaced by seven even more nefarious demons.

Mat 12:43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

Mat 12:44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.

Mat 12:45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

12. This is the reason the question is not directly answered; the question of fasting or not fasting is inconsequential and accordingly left unanswered.

12.1 The sinful attitude revealed by the question of the fast was that it was not observed for God's glory but was purely for self.

13. Fasting says God through Zechariah was being mechanically and formalistically performed.

13.1 Isaiah in his day denounced such empty ritualism in Isa 1:10-15.

Isa 1:10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

Isa 1:11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

Isa 1:12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

Isa 1:13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

Isa 1:14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

Isa 1:15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

14. The Lord is asking the question: Are you fasting for me or for thee? Several considerations accentuate the incisiveness of His query:

14.1 The Lord Himself asks the question through the prophet Zechariah.

14.2 The question is introduced by the interrogative particle.

14.3 The use of the first person pronoun with the verb **Tsamtath** did you fast to me?

14.4 The emphasis (very unusual) on the personal element of the question. The verse ends with **Ani** thus even Me? The **Ani** is used appositionally to intensify the force of the question.

15. Fasting should have been a healthful reminder of the deserved affliction suffered at the hands of the Lord and a token of genuine and continual repentance in the light of God's chastisement.

16. Such an attitude would have been consonant with the general principles laid down in the New Testament.

1Co 10:31 Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

17. The prophet lays his finger upon the root of their failure. They were all along doing what they did for selfish reasons. Pious religionist enjoy ritual which in most cases is without reality. In various denominations ritual is the only source of doctrine.

17.1 After the ritual often comes false doctrine.

18. Now let's see what we have by way of an expanded translation.

Expanded Translation

Zec 7:5 Zechariah, this is what I want you to say to all the priests and the people of the land, when you fasted and mourned in the fifth and the seventh month, even in those seventy years were you fasting and mourning for Me, really even Me your Lord God?

19. The Lord's question continues, speaking through the prophet Zechariah.

KJV

Zec 7:6 And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?

NIV

Zec 7:6 And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves?

Hebrew

Va Kiy - And when or And because

Akal - you all were eating

Va Shatah - and when you all were drinking

Halo Athah - did you all not

Akal - eat

Va Athah - and did you all not

Shatah - drink

Working Translation: And when you ate and drank were you not eating and drinking for and on behalf of yourselves.

Principles:

1. Eating and drinking is a non-meritorious act but very essential for life.
2. We seldom, like Israel, give proper thanks and consideration of God's grace when we eat and drink.
3. The question is asked earlier when you were not fasting, did you really think of God when you ate and drank? Did you thank him for the food and drink and understand it was by His wonderful grace you were permitted and given opportunity to eat and drink.
4. The question is, is fasting more important than eating and drinking, why not equal time for recognition of God's daily grace provisions?
5. If man does it? it is important but if God does it man takes it rather matter of factly.
6. The words of verses four through six are a well-deserved rebuke not only to the questioners from Bethel but also to the priests and people of the land in general.

7. The prophet is very careful to make sure he makes clear the rebuke is from the Lord and not from him personally.

8. Moreover emphasis on the special revelation of God's word to the prophet in this instance is required by the apparent unfitness of the priests to give a satisfactory answer since they themselves were affected by the empty ritualism.

9. God had no adequate place in their mechanical and external ritual.

10. The question was symptomatic of a deeper problem of attitude and the barometer of a serious evil that was infesting the nation. This is no doubt why the question is not answered directly and why the answer is therefore inconsequential.

11. Verses five and six makes clear the fasting during the seventy years and Israel's fasting in general were not done for God's glory. It was a piece of empty ritualism so powerfully denounced by more than one prophet.

12. Now for an expanded translation of Zec 7:6.

External Translation

Zec 7:6 Now when you were not fasting but eating and drinking were you not eating and drinking for and on behalf of yourselves.

13. God now reminds Israel of their fasting in times past when Israel was prosperous. He asks about their attitude toward doctrine. Both the pre and post exilic nation had a problem with ritual as a remedy rather than a reminder of their need to cycle Bible doctrine in their soul and thus fulfill His protocol.

14. Now let's see what we can learn from verse seven.

KJV

Zec 7:7 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?

NIV

Zec 7:7 Are these not the words the LORD proclaimed through the earlier prophets when Jerusalem and its surrounding towns were at rest and prosperous, and the Negev and the western foothills were settled?"

Hebrew

Halo - And should you not have listened

Eth Ha Davar - the words

Asher Yehov ָah - which Jehovah

Qara - cried and proclaimed
 Be Yad - by the hand
 Ha Navii - of the prophets
 Ha Rosh - first in point in time or earlier
 Be Hayah - was or became
 Yerushalaim - to Jerusalem
 Yashav - when she was resting or sitting
 Va Shalom - at peace or rest
 Va Ir - and the cities
 Savav - from around
 Va Ha Negev - and the south
 Va Ha Shaphel - and the plains
 Yashav - also sitting

Working Translation: And should you not have listened to the words of Jehovah proclaimed by the many prophets at a time when Jerusalem was at peace experiencing prosperity; even the cities of the southern plain were also sharing in Jerusalem's prosperity.

Principles

1. Why should they trouble themselves about something God had not commanded, when they were so heedless of what he had explicitly charged through the pre-Exilic prophets?
2. It is far better to offer God obedience than to heap up fasts without number (Isa 58:1-9).

True Fasting

Isa 58:1 "Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the house of Jacob their sins.

Isa 58:2 For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them.

Isa 58:3 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?' "Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers.

Isa 58:4 Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.

Isa 58:5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes - ô? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

Isa 58:6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

Isa 58:7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-- when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

Isa 58:8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

Isa 58:9 Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk,

3. Isaiah and others made clear that fasting could not replace the need to return to God and His protocol.

4. Sin and evil was the cause of their fasting. If sin and evil were forsaken, the fast would no longer be necessary says God through Zechariah.

5. In fact God early on pointed out the importance of obedience as against ritual.

1Sa 15:20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

1Sa 15:21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

1Sa 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

1Sa 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

6. Now let's see how our verse looks by way of Expanded Translation.

Expanded Translation

Zec 7:7 Should you not have listened and concentrated on the words of Jehovah proclaimed by the former prophets in a day when both Jerusalem and the cities of the southern plain were experiencing prosperity.

7. We face the same attitude problem today when grace is rejected and legalism/ritual overtakes the family of God.

8. Often Christians, like Israel, devote more time and thought to the things we do for God as opposed to what He is doing for us.

9. Now let's see what we can learn from verse eight.

KJV

Zec 7:8 And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying,

NIV

Zec 7:8 And the word of the LORD came again to Zechariah:

Hebrew

Va Hayah - And it was

Davar Yehovah - the Word of the Lord

El Zekaryah - to Zechariah

Le Amar - saying

Working Translation: And the Word of The Lord came to Zechariah saying.

Principles:

1. Once again, God the Holy Spirit would seem to be emphasizing Zechariah's positive volition.
2. There must always exist positive volition before God provides His Word to a believer.
3. When you hunger and thirst after righteousness you will be filled but not a minute before.
4. Zechariah is being told what to say next. He has already had a revelation for those who came from Bethel and now he is being given another.
5. There is no word for again as the NIV translates however given this is the third revelation, the context demands the adverb.
6. Before we move to verse nine, let's see how our verse looks by way of expanded translation.

Expanded Translation

Zec 7:8 And then the Word of The Lord came again unto me saying.

KJV

Zec 7:9 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true ? judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:

NIV

Zec 7:9 "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.

Hebrew
Koh - In this manner
Yehovah Tsava - the Lord of the Armies
Amar - declared
Le Amar - saying
Mishpat - justice
Emeth - truth or doctrine
Shaphat - must judge
Va Chesed - and grace
Va Racham - and compassion
Asu Ish - every man
Eth Achar Yn - to his brother

Working Translation: Accordingly, in this manner the Lord of the armies said judge with justice, truth, grace and compassion every man with his brother.

Principles

1. The Mosaic Law and the prophets had all united in their testimony demanding practical righteousness and justice in everyday life.

Deu 24:12 And if the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge:

Deu 24:13 In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the LORD thy God.

Deu 24:14 Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates:

2. God has always delighted in the proper administration of justice.

Lev 19:15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

2.1 To do justice is far more acceptable than ritualistic fasting and sacrifice.

Pro 21:3 To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

3. It was the lack of righteousness found in the land of Canaan which resulted in their dispossession.

Deu 9:4 Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee.

Deu 9:5 Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

4. The Lord in His Second Advent shall judge in righteousness and justice.

Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Psa 9:7 But the LORD shall endure forever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment.

Psa 9:8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.

Psa 9:9 The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

Isa 11:3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

Isa 11:4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

Isa 11:5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

Isa 16:5 In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a man will sit on it-- one from the house of David-- one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness.

4.1 When Jesus returns Israel's princes will no longer abuse their subjects.

Eze 45:8 In the land shall be his possession in Israel: and my princes shall no more oppress my people; and the rest of the land shall they give to the house of Israel according to their tribes.

Eze 45:9 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord GOD.

5. David said the Lord led him in paths of righteousness.

Psa 23:3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

6. David declares the value and importance of righteousness in Psa 40.

Psa 40:6 Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

Psa 40:7 Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,

Psa 40:8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

Psa 40:9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.

Psa 40:10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving kindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

7. James tells us the prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Jam 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

8. Mercy and compassion between brothers delight the heart of the infinitely righteous Creator.

9. That both pre-exilic, exilic and post exilic Israel had a problem with mercy, justice and righteousness is clear from so very many Scriptures.

10. I have recited but a few. Recall what we earlier learned about the extreme avarice and greed for which Israel had become infamous.

11. Justice and righteousness demanded of man is couched in the essence of **Chesed** and **Racham**.

11.1 **Chesed** is the Hebrew counter-part of the Greek word **Charis**; **Racham** is the Hebrew counter-part of the Greek word **Eleos**.

12. **Chesed** or **Charis** is God's plan and **Racham** or **Eleos** is God's plan in action.

13. The admonitions begun here in verse eight are provide as that which Israel should !be concerned as over against fasting.

14. Before we see what else should be their concern I want to provide an expanded translation of verse nine.

Expanded Translation

Zec 7:9 Accordingly the Lord of the armies said judge with justice, truth, grace and compassion every man his brother.

KJV

Zec 7:10 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.

NIV

Zec 7:10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.'

Hebrew

Va Alam - And a widow

Va Yatam - and an orphan

Va Ger Anah - and an oppressed one

El Ashaq - to the oppression and violence

Va Rath - or conjure up evil against

Ish - each man

Achri Yn - his brother

El Chashav - to u imagine evil

Be Lev Kem - in your heart

Working Translation: You must stop oppressing widows, orphans, the oppressed and the poor; you must also stop imagining evil in your hearts one toward another.

Principles

1. Zechariah has been told to tell the delegation from Bethel to stop oppressing:

1.1 the widow, the fatherless, the gentiles living in the land and the poor.

2. The less fortunate and the unprotected are always the special charge of the Lord; any kindness shown them is especially pleasing to Him.

3. They are also urged not to imagine evil against his brothers.

4. Resentment and hatred in the heart against a neighbor are clearly prohibited.

5. Faith and piety must go hand in hand. We are what we think; as the Scripture declares as a man thinketh in his heart so is he.

6. Religion without morality is useless and a mockery says the Lord of the armies.

7. At this point the context involves a response to the delegation from Bethel however there is no doubt all of Israel is in mind.

7.1 Additionally, as we will see beginning in verse eleven the message becomes one of, "I sent this same message to your pre-exilic generation and they refused to change.

Zec 7:11 But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

7.2 In verse fourteen the Lord indicates that this negative volition on the part of the pre-exilic generation resulted in their exile.

Zec 7:14 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.

8. Israel did not take care of the poor but rather offered them injustice. Let's see what we can learn from the Doctrine of The Poor.

8.1 The poor for purposes of our discussion shall be confined to those who are truly destitute of finances sufficient for daily needs.

8.1.1 This will exclude those who do not wish to work, those who choose crime, drug addiction, alcoholism, to be homeless, etc. as their method of living.

8.1.2 We are speaking here of those who are physically and/or mentally disabled.

8.2 First a little background about what the Bible teaches about economic systems. For maximum prosperity the economic principles found in the Mosaic Law must be implemented. 1Ti 1:8-9

1Ti 1:8 We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.

8.2.1 Maximum freedom for the individual is God's optimum and represents a manifestation of the first divine institution, volition.

8.2.2 The right of private property and protection of property rights is repeatedly established in Scripture.

Exo 20:15 "You shall not steal.

Exo 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Exo 22:2 "If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed;

Mat 12:29 "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house."

2Th 3:11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies.
2Th 3:12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

8.2.3 Free enterprise then is God's plan for His client nations.

8.2.4 A free enterprise system will produce excess and make for maximum resources for charity.

8.3 Scripture provides insight into what causes poverty. In these verses you will find numerous uses of the English word " sluggard " or " slothful ;" this is **Atsel** in the Hebrew and means idle, habitually laze, lethargic, lean or indolent.

8.3.1 A failure to work and save for the future. Pro 6:6-11

Pro 6:6 Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!

Pro 6:7 It has no commander, no overseer or ruler,

Pro 6:8 yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.

Pro 6:9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?

Pro 6:10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest--

Pro 6:11 and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

Pro 10:4 Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.

Pro 10:5 He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.

Pro 13:4 The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.

Pro 19:15 Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry.

8.3.2 Wickedness or evil which we call reversionism - as a general rule God makes it tough on people negative toward Him.

Pro 10:3 The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.

Pro 28:20 A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.

8.3.3 A drunkard or glutton will experience poverty.

Pro 23:20 Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat,
Pro 23:21 for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in

ragged.

8.3.4 Being industrious is a means of avoiding poverty. Foolish people pursuing impractical fantasies also make for poverty.

Pro 28:19 He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty.

8.3.5 A slothful man is lazy and as a result often poor.

Pro 19:24 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he will not even bring it back to his mouth!

8.3.6 This would seem to be a good description of the vast majority of those on our welfare rolls today.

8.3.7 The indolent (in the Old Testament economy) were often so lazy and as a result they ended up as slaves.

Pro 12:24 Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labor.

8.3.8 The habitually lazy are very often wasteful.

Pro 12:27 The lazy man does not roast his game, but the diligent man prizes his possessions.

8.3.9 There is a great difference between the life of the habitually lazy man and the life of the energetic man. Pro 15:19

Pro 15:19 The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway.

8.3.10 The slothful person will suffer hunger.

Pro 19:15 Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry.

8.3.11 The person who seeks a fast profit often finds poverty. The same is true for the miser.

Pro 28:22 A stingy man is eager to get rich and is unaware that poverty awaits him.

2Co 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

Mal 3:10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.

Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

8.4 No matter how hard we try to eliminate poverty, these efforts will prove futile; the poor will always be with us. In the July 27, 1998 issue of Newsweek there appeared an article entitled "The Faces of Famine" which describes the world and its dilemma of pervasive poverty. I will read in part: "Here we go again. Skeletal starving Africans are back in the news, this time from Sudan (a communist country at war with itself). If you are moved - and you'd have to be heartless not to be - operators are standing by to take your check ...

If you have any doubts that your contributions will really help, the charities will assure you that food will reach these victims quickly and save their lives, at least until the next famine ... Now you can change the channel with the warm feeling that you have done what you can to fight hunger. I too feel like reaching for my checkbook when I see the photographs. But I know better. After spending nearly 20 years in Africa as an aid worker and journalist, I know that fighting hunger is anything but simple. And I have learned that any donation I might make may in fact insure that next year I will see fresh photographs of starving people ...

8.4.1 This does not mean that we should refuse to perform what God commands with reference to assisting those less fortunate.

8.5 As we will see later God does provide certain mandates with reference to assistance.

Deu 15:11 There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.

Mat 26:11 "The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me."

8.5.1 Jesus' prediction of pervasive and everlasting poverty was part of a rebuke to the world's greatest liberal - Judas Iscariot.

Joh 12:4 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected,
Joh 12:5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."

Joh 12:6 He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

8.5.2 Judas like many "do gooders" loved the masses but hated the individual.

8.5.3 Judas like so many "do gooders" knew better what should be done with your money.

8.6 It is the Lord who makes the poor and the rich; therefore, it is He who can eradicate poverty as well as bestow affluence.

1Sa 2:7 The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts.

Psa 113:7 He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap;

Psa 75:6 No one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt a man.

Psa 75:7 But it is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another.

8.7 Charity for the truly destitute is a bona fide function for establishment.

Pro 29:14 If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will always be secure.

Exo 23:11 but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

Lev 19:9 "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest.

Lev 19:10 Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.

8.7.1 The tithe paid to the national treasury every third year went to a fund designated for the Levite Priest and the poor of the land. Deu 14:28-29

8.7.2 There is not an authorization in Scripture for assisting the poor in other lands; internationalism is always evil. There is one exception:

8.7.3 we are to evangelize the entire world, however, each national entity is responsible for what occurs within their national boundaries.

8.7.4 nationalism is one of the divine Institutions and it is Satan who weakens the nations. Isa 14:12

Isa 14:12 How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!

8.8 There is a special blessing for those who help the poor.

Pro 22:9 A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.

Psa 41:1 Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble.

Psa 41:2 The LORD will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes.

8.8.1 There is not only establishment responsibility to assist the destitute but individual citizens are also to assist those in need.

8.9 There is a special discipline for those who ignore the needs of the poor.

Pro 21:13 If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.

8.9.1 Through poverty many unbelievers see their need for salvation.

Mar 10:23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

Mar 10:24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!"

Mar 10:25 "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

8.10 The poor are fortunate, in one sense, for they avoid superficial/pseudo friendships which come from having wealth.

Pro 19:4 Wealth brings many friends, but a poor man's friend desert him.

8.10.1 The poor are often the target for hypocrisy. Jam 2:2-4

Jam 2:2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in.

Jam 2:3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet,"

Jam 2:4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

8.11 The poor should in the local church have the same spiritual privileges as the wealthy.

Jam 2:1 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.

Jam 2:2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in.

Jam 2:3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet,"

Jam 2:4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

8.12 As the Church Age evolved we find the epistles instructing believers with reference to the poor as follows.

8.13 We are to render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, we are to never think about revolution or disobeying authority.

8.13.1 When government exceeds its authority and eschews establishment principles we are to heed their mandates, for example:

8.13.2 if the government steals from the rich by requiring more than a ten percent across the board income tax and foolishly throws money at every problem, including the eradication of the world's poverty, we are to react with faithful submission.

8.14 The epistles seem to demand that each local Church address poverty; it is however a matter uniquely the province of individuals within a local Church.

8.14.1 For example, benevolent funds were to be established within each local church to care for their indigent.

1Ti 5:3 Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need.

1Ti 5:4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.

1Ti 5:5 The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help.

1Ti 5:6 But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.

1Ti 5:7 Give the people these instructions, too, so that no one may be open to blame.

Jam 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

8.14.2 It should be noted all of the assistance was based on a free will offering without pressure.

8.15 Never do we find instruction to help those who can and will not work, in fact quite the contrary. 2Th 3:11-15

2Th 3:11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies.

2Th 3:12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

2Th 3:13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.

2Th 3:14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed.

2Th 3:15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

8.15.1 In summary, let's look at a "problem passage" and apply what we have learned to the instruction:

Acts 4:32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.

8.15.2 There are those who teach this passage authorizes socialism/communism/liberalism as the Christian's economic/political system.

8.15.3 Nothing could be further from the truth in the light of a categorical study.

8.15.4 The ultimate welfare state cannot tolerate private property. The Bible very clearly establishes these rights.

8.15.5 The problem passage is a clear display of Christian charity and did not in any way abolish the capitalistic right of private property. Again recall:

Exo 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

8.15.6 The welfare state is based on class hatred and a desire for equality of all peoples, even to the transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor by means of government force. God is not an egalitarian. Heaven will not be a place of equality.

8.15.7 Such community of goods as set forth in our "problem passage" was not compulsory but voluntary as a way of eliminating special needs. Keep in mind that Jerusalem was overflowing with many Jewish people and Gentiles coming from all over the world to worship during the Passover and those feasts immediately following The Passover.

8.15.8 In Jerusalem also there were many converts from monotheistic Judaism who had converted and were now remaining in Jerusalem to await the Lord's return and establishment of His Kingdom.

8.15.9 Many of these people had extended their stay beyond original plans and were in special financial need.

8.15.10 The manifest needs of many precipitated a voluntary sharing in a time of great financial disparity.

8.15.11 This occasion recorded for us in scripture is a beautiful display of oneness and caring among believers.

8.15.12 It must be observed this sharing was:

8.15.13 Voluntary on the part of each believer - compare Acts 4:32 with Acts 5:4

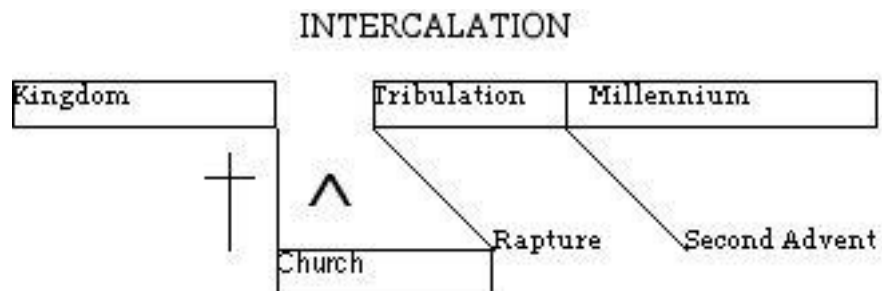
Act 4:32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.

Act 5:4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

8.15.14 Ananias was in trouble because he lied to the Holy Spirit, not because he did not give.

8.15.15 All of the sharers were anticipating the Kingdom when as our Lord said repeatedly, "there will be no need for material things."

8.15.16 They were misguided in their assumption that the Lord would soon return for Israel. After reviewing Peter's first and second sermons, it was clear these early church disciples had not learned of the Church Age and its insertion between the 1st and 2nd Advents of Jesus. The Church Age intercalation was not anticipated.



8.15.17 This was a time of great persecution and great need.

8.15.18 This act of sharing was restricted to the Jerusalem Church and we find no amplification in the epistles.

8.16 In the year of our Lord, 1998, America faced the ultimate irony; the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were madly running away from "big government," while our nation, paradoxically rushed toward the welfare state.

8.17 Capitalism is taught in both the Old and New Testament and big government is never proscribed.

End Lesson Taught 8-4-2004

Zechariah Lesson 68

1. Last week I taught Zec 7:6-8 and when time expired we were about to complete an analysis of verse nine.
2. Before we complete the exegesis of Zec 7:9 I want to provide an expanded translation of Zec 7:1-8.

Zec 7:1 And then in the 4th year of King Darius on the 4th of December 518. the Word of the Lord came to Zechariah.

Zec 7:2 And the citizens of Bethel sent to the house of the Lord Sherezer and Regem the King and his men to ask of the Lord whether they were to continue the four fasts.

Zec 7:3 So the delegation asked of the prophets and the Temple Priests who served around the altar if they should continue the fast of the fifth month as both they and the remnant in Jerusalem had done for some seventy years.

Zec 7:4 And then the word of the Lord of the armies again came to me saying.

Zec 7:5 Zechariah, this is what I want you to say to all the priests and the people of the land, when you fasted and mourned in the fifth and the seventh month, even in those seventy years were you fasting and mourning for Me, really even Me your Lord God?

Zec 7:6 Now when you were not fasting but eating and drinking were you not eating and drinking for and on behalf of yourselves?

Zec 7:7 Should you not have listened and concentrated on the words of Jehovah proclaimed by the former prophets in a day when both Jerusalem and the cities of the southern plain were experiencing prosperity?

Zec 7:8 And then the Word of The Lord came again unto me saying.

3. Let's review some of that learned before we resume our analysis of verse eight.
4. In verses four through seven the motivation behind the question of those who came from Bethel is exposed.
5. In verse five we find a rebuke of the messengers from Bethel. The actual question asked was not the significant issue; the question, according to Zechariah, was a minor issue.
6. The episode recorded, was far reaching and symptomatic, of a deeper problem of attitude and the barometer of a serious evil that was beginning to infest the entire nation - a pervading rejection of God's protocol and His grace.
7. Fasting says God, through Zechariah, was being mechanically and formalistically performed. The prophet warns of the need for true righteousness and not meaningless ritual.
8. Now for new material and point.

9. David declared the value and importance of righteousness in Psalm 40.

9.1 This declaration by David is a prophecy of one of the many things the Lord Jesus will do at His First Advent. It is in part quoted in the Book of Hebrews.

Heb 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

Heb 10:2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

Heb 10:3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

Heb 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

Heb 10:5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

Heb 10:6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

Heb 10:7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

Heb 10:8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;

Heb 10:9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

9.2. James tells us the prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Jam 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

9.3 Mercy and compassion between brothers delight the heart of the infinitely righteous Creator.

9.4. That both Pre-exilic, exilic and post exilic Israel had a problem with mercy, justice and righteousness is clear from so very many Scriptures.

9.5 Recall what we earlier learned about the extreme avarice and greed for which Israel had become infamous.

9.6 The admonitions begun here in verse eight are provided as that which Israel should be concerned as over against fasting and other rituals. All rituals teach a reality and it is about the reality and not the ritual that emphasis should be placed.

9.7 Before we see what else should be their concern I want to provide an expanded translation of verse nine.

Expanded Translation

Zec 7:9 Accordingly the Lord of the armies said judge with justice, truth and grace; every man must show true compassion toward his brother.

10. Now we are ready for verse ten.

KJV

Zec 7:10 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.

NIV

Zec 7:10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.'

Hebrew

Va Alam - And a widow

Va Yatam - and an orphan

Va El Ger Anah - and to a stranger

Ashaq - you oppress and treat with violence

Va Rath - or conjure up evil against

Ish - each man

Ach Yn - his brother

El Chashav - to imagine evil

Be Lev Kem - in your heart

Working Translation: You oppress widows, orphans and the stranger; you also imagine evil in your hearts one toward another.

Principles

1. Zechariah has been told to tell the delegation from Bethel to stop oppressing: the widow, the fatherless, the gentiles living in the land and the poor.

1.1 The negative (to stop) is implied although verse ten simply declares you oppress and treat with violence the poor.

2. The less fortunate and the unprotected are always the special charge of the Lord; any kindness shown them is especially pleasing to Him.

3. They are also urged not to imagine evil against their brothers.

4. Resentment and hatred in the heart against a neighbor are clearly prohibited.

5. Faith and piety must go hand in hand. We are what we think; as the Scripture declares as a man thinketh in his heart so is he.

6. Religion without morality is useless and a mockery says the Lord of the armies.

7. At this point the context involves a response to the delegation from Bethel however there is no doubt all of Israel is in mind.

7.1 Additionally, as we will see beginning in verse eleven the message becomes one of, "I sent this same message to your pre-exilic generation and they refused to change.

Zec 7:11 But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

7.2 In verse fourteen the Lord indicates that this negative volition on the part of the pre-exilic generation resulted in their exile.

Zec 7:14 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.

8. Israel did not take care of the poor but rather offered them injustice. Let's see what we can learn from the Doctrine of The Poor.

8.1 The poor for purposes of our discussion shall be confined to those who are truly destitute of finances sufficient for daily needs.

8.1.1 This will exclude those who do not wish to work, those who choose crime, drug addiction, alcoholism and/or homelessness as their method of living.

8.1.2 We are speaking here of those who are physically and/or mentally disabled.

8.2 First a little background about what the Bible teaches about economic systems. For maximum prosperity the economic principles found in the Mosaic Law must be implemented. 1Ti 1:8-10

1Ti 1:8 We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.

1Ti 1:9 We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,

1Ti 1:10 for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers-- and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine.

8.2.1 Maximum freedom for the individual is God's optimum and represents a manifestation of the first divine institution, volition. The right of private property is becoming extinct under the assault of both the Republican and Democratic parties.

9. I want to quote first from Walter Williams, head of the Economics Department and James Mason University and then Paul Jacob, a Conservative Editoralist.

“What is socialism? We miss the boat if we say it’s the agenda of left-wingers and Democrats. According to Marxist doctrine, socialism is a stage of society between capitalism and communism where private ownership and control over property are eliminated. The essence of socialism is the attenuation and ultimate abolition of private property rights. Attacks on private property include, but are not limited to, confiscating the rightful property of one person and giving it to another to whom it doesn't belong. When this is done privately, we call it theft. When it's done collectively, we use euphemisms: income transfers or redistribution. It's not just left-wingers and Democrats who call for and admire socialism but right-wingers and Republicans as well. Republicans and right-wingers support taking the earnings of one American and giving them to farmers, banks, airlines and other failing businesses. ... Both agree on taking one American's earnings to give to another; they simply differ on the recipients. This kind of congressional activity constitutes at least two-thirds of the federal budget.

“Regardless of the purpose, such behavior is immoral. It's a reduced form of slavery. After all, what is the essence of slavery? It's the forceful use of one person to serve the purposes of another person. When Congress, through the tax code, takes the earnings of one person and turns around to give it to another person ... it is forcibly using one person to serve the purposes of another. The moral question stands out in starker relief when we acknowledge that those spending programs coming out of Congress do not represent lawmakers reaching into their own pockets and sending out the money. Moreover, there's no tooth fairy or Santa Claus giving them the money. The fact that government has no resources of its very own forces us to acknowledge that the only way government can give one American a dollar is to first -- through intimidation, threats and coercion take that dollar from some other American.” -- Walter Williams

"Usually, politicians use 50-cent words to puff up two-bit ideas. When it comes to taking away people's land, they do the opposite. They use three phrases -- 'eminent domain,' economic development - master plan' -- and they mean big money. A baseball stadium, or a strip mall, or a department store looks better -- to the politicians -- than whatever's already on a piece of property. So they take the property away and give it to someone else, whether the owner likes it or not. Eminent domain is supposed to let government do necessary things like build roads and run utility lines.

“Today, it’s a way to beef up a town’s tax base by replacing homes, small businesses -- even churches -- with high volume enterprises or gentrified housing.

“Take Elizabeth Fernando. She's lost three properties to the city of Indianapolis. First for an athletic facility. Then for a convention center. Now, they’re taking her parking garage for -- get this -- parking! The city’s restoring some 'historic' apartments next door, and wants a flat lot instead of a garage.

Normandy, Missouri, pondered seizing a convent -- a convent! -- to put in a strip-mall. Thankfully, a higher power intervened. Nearby St. Louis declared a building 'blighted' and seized it. Why? Because the owners refused to give its tenant, a department store, a new long-term lease ... and the city fathers wanted that store to stay there. Eminent domain used to mean a necessary taking. These days, it just means political thievery." Paul Jacob

8.2.2 The right of private property and protection of property rights is repeatedly established in Scripture.

Exo 20:15 You shall not steal ...

Exo 20:17 You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Exo 22:2 "If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed;

Mat 12:29 "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house."

2Th 3:11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies.

2Th 3:12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

8.2.3 Free enterprise then is God's plan for His client nations.

8.2.4 A free enterprise system will produce excess and make for maximum resources for charity.

8.3 Scripture provides insight into what causes poverty. We will look at several Scriptures where the English word "sluggard" or "slothful," is found. It is a translation from **Atsel** meaning to be idle, habitually lazy, lethargic or indolent.

8.3.1 A failure to work and save for the future is said to be a reason for poverty.

Pro 6:6-11

Pro 6:6 Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!

Pro 6:7 It has no commander, no overseer or ruler,

Pro 6:8 yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.

Pro 6:9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?

Pro 6:10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest--

Pro 6:11 and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

Pro 10:4 Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.

Pro 10:5 He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.

Pro 13:4 The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.

Pro 19:15 Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry.

8.3.2 Wickedness or evil, which we call reversionism, is as a general rule a prime source of God's discipline; God often makes it economically tough on people who are negative toward His protocol.

Pro 10:3 The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.

8.3.3 A drunkard or glutton will experience poverty.

Pro 23:20 Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat,
Pro 23:21 for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.

8.3.4 Being industrious is a means of avoiding poverty. Foolish people pursuing impractical fantasies also make for poverty.

Pro 28:19 He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty.

8.3.5 A slothful man is lazy and as a result is often poor.

Pro 19:24 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he will not even bring it back to his mouth!

8.3.6 This would seem to be a good description of the vast majority of those on our welfare rolls today.

8.3.7 The indolent (in the Old Testament economy) were often lazy and as a result they ended up as slaves.

Pro 12:24 Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labor.

8.3.8 The habitually lazy are very often wasteful.

Pro 12:27 The lazy man does not roast his game, but the diligent man prizes his possessions.

8.3.9 There is a great difference between the life of the habitually lazy man and the life of the energetic man. Pro 15:19

Pro 15:19 The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway.

8.3.10 The slothful person will suffer hunger.

Pro 19:15 Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry.

8.3.11 The person who seeks a fast profit often finds poverty. The same is true for the miser.

Pro 28:22 A stingy man is eager to get rich and is unaware that poverty awaits him.

2Co 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

8.3.12 Establishment compliance and/or protocol compliance is a source of blessing. The Lord waits patiently to divide His spoil with the mature ones.

Mal 3:10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

2Co 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

2Co 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

2Co 9:9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth forever.

Isa 30:18 And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

Isa 53:12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

End Lesson Taught 8-25-20

Zechariah Lesson 69

1. Last week I taught Zec 7:9 and 10 and when time expired we were looking at the Doctrine of The Poor.

2. Before we continue that study I want to provide an expanded translation of Zec 7:1-10.

Zec 7:1 And then in the 4th year of King Darius on the 4th of December 518. the Word of the Lord came to Zechariah.

Zec 7:2 And the citizens of Bethel sent to the house of the Lord Sherezer and Regem the King and his men to ask of the Lord whether they were to continue the four fasts.

Zec 7:3 So the delegation asked of the prophets and the Temple Priests who served around the altar if they should continue the fast of the fifth month as both they and the remnant in Jerusalem had done for some seventy years.

Zec 7:4 And then the word of the Lord of the armies again came to me saying.

Zec 7:5 Zechariah, this is what I want you to say to all the priests and the people of the land, when you fasted and mourned in the fifth and the seventh month, even in those seventy years were you fasting and mourning for Me, really even Me your Lord God?

Zec 7:6 Now when you were not fasting but eating and drinking were you not eating and drinking for and on behalf of yourselves?

Zec 7:7 Should you not have listened and concentrated on the words of Jehovah proclaimed by the former prophets in a day when both Jerusalem and the cities of the southern plain were experiencing prosperity?

Zec 7:8 And then the Word of The Lord came again unto me saying.

Zec 7:9 Accordingly the Lord of the armies said judge with justice, truth and grace; every man must show true compassion toward his brother.

Zec 7:10 Zechariah was then motivated by the Spirit to say, You must stop oppressing the widows, orphans, and the poor and you must stop committing mental attitude sins toward one another by thinking evil against your brothers.

3. Let's review some of that learned before we resume our analysis of the Doctrine of The Poor.

4. Zechariah has been told to tell the delegation from Bethel to stop oppressing: the widow, the fatherless, the gentiles living in the land and the poor.

5. Faith and piety must go hand in hand. We are what we think; as the Scripture declares as a man thinketh in his heart so is he.Ó

6. Religion without morality is useless and a mockery says the Lord of the armies.

7. At this point the context involves a response to the delegation from Bethel however there is no doubt all of Israel is in mind.

7.1 Additionally, as we will see beginning in verse eleven the message becomes one of, "I sent this same message to your pre-exilic generation and they refused to change. Zec 7:11

7.2 In verse fourteen the Lord indicates that this negative volition on the part of the pre-exilic generation resulted in their exile. Zec 7:14

8. Israel did not take care of the poor but rather offered them injustice. Let's resume our study of the Doctrine of The Poor.

8.1 The poor for purposes of our discussion shall be confined to those who are truly destitute of finances sufficient for daily needs. This will exclude those who do not wish to work, those who choose crime, drug addiction, alcoholism and/or homelessness as their method of living - the truly destitute are in view.

8.1.1 We are speaking here of those who are physically and/or mentally disabled.

8.2 First a little background about what the Bible teaches about economic systems. For maximum prosperity the economic principles found in the Mosaic Law must be implemented. 1Ti 1:8-10

8.2.1 Maximum freedom for the individual is God's optimum and represents a manifestation of the first divine institution, volition. The right of private property is becoming extinct under the assault of both the Republican and Democratic parties.

8.2.2 The right of private property and protection of property rights is repeatedly established in Scripture. Exo 20:15, 20:17, 22:2; Mat 12:29 and 2Th 3:11-12

8.2.3 Free enterprise then is God's plan for His client nations. A free enterprise system will produce excess and make for maximum resources for charity.

8.3 Scripture provides insight into what causes poverty. We will look at several Scriptures where the English word "sluggard" or "slothful," is found. It is a translation from **Atsel** meaning to be idle, habitually lazy, lethargic or indolent.

8.3.1 A failure to work and save for the future is said to be a reason for poverty. Prov 6:6-11, 10:4-5, 13:4 and Pro 19:15

8.3.2 Wickedness or evil, which we call reversionism, is as a general rule a prime source of God's discipline; God often makes it economically tough on people who are negative toward His protocol. Pro 10:3

8.3.3 A drunkard or glutton will experience poverty. Pro 23:20-21

8.3.4 Being industrious is a means of avoiding poverty. Foolish people pursuing impractical fantasies also make for poverty. Pro 28:19

8.3.5 A slothful man is lazy and as a result is often poor. Pro 19:24

8.3.6 This would seem to be a good description of the vast majority of those on our welfare rolls today.

8.3.7 The indolent were often lazy and as a result they ended up as slaves. Pro 12:24

8.3.8 The habitually lazy are very often wasteful. Pro 12:27

8.3.9 There is a great difference between the life of the habitually lazy man and the life of the energetic man. Pro 15:19

8.3.10 The slothful person will suffer hunger. Pro 19:15

8.3.11 The person who seeks a fast profit often finds poverty. The same is true for the miser. Pro 28:22

2Co 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

8.3.12 Establishment compliance and/or protocol compliance is a source of blessing. The Lord waits patiently to divide His spoil with the mature ones. Mal 3:10; 2Co 9:7-9; Isa 30:18 and Isa 53:12

8.3.13 Now for new material and point 8.4.

8.4 No matter how hard we try to eliminate poverty, these efforts will prove futile; the poor will always be with us.

8.4.1 This does not mean that we should refuse to perform what God commands with reference to assisting those less fortunate.

8.5 As we will see later God does provide certain mandates with reference to assistance.

Deu 15:11 There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.

Mat 26:11 "The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me."

8.5.1 Jesus' prediction of pervasive and everlasting poverty was part of a rebuke to the world's greatest liberal - Judas Iscariot.

Joh 12:4 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected,
Joh 12:5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."

Joh 12:6 He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

8.5.2 Judas like many "do-gooders" loved the masses but hated the individual.

8.5.3 Judas like so many "do-gooders" knew better what should be done with everyone else's money.

8.5.4 Judas, like many do-gooders, especially our Senators and Congressmen, often find it convenient to skim off the top, a just compensation they say for their years of public service. Most often it is legal; consisting of lucrative salaries, retirement packages, marvelous health care benefits and post service employment. They make their rules for each other's benefits.

8.6 It is the Lord who makes the poor and the rich; therefore, it is He who can eradicate poverty as well as bestow affluence.

1Sa 2:7 The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts.

Psa 113:7 He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap;

Psa 75:6 No one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt a man.

Psa 75:7 But it is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another.

8.7 Charity for the truly destitute is a bona fide function for establishment.

Pro 29:14 If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will always be secure.

Exo 23:11 but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

Lev 19:9 "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest.

Lev 19:10 Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.

8.7.1 A tithe paid to the national treasury every third year went to a fund designated for the Levite Priest and the poor of the land.

Deu 14:28 At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns,

Deu 14:29 so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

8.7.2 There is no authorization in Scripture for assisting the poor in other lands; internationalism is always evil. There is one exception.

8.7.3 We are to evangelize the entire world, however, each national entity is responsible for what occurs within their national boundaries.

8.7.4 Nationalism is one of the divine Institutions and it is Satan who weakens the nations. Isa 14:12

Isa 14:12 How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!

8.8 There is a special blessing for those who help the poor.

Pro 22:9 A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.

Psa 41:1 Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble.

Psa 41:2 The LORD will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes.

8.8.1 There is not only establishment responsibility to assist the destitute but individual citizens are also to assist those in need.

8.9 There is a special discipline for those who ignore the needs of the poor.

Pro 21:13 If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.

8.9.1 Through poverty many unbelievers see their need for salvation.

Mar 10:23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

Mar 10:24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!"

Mar 10:25 "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

8.10 The poor are fortunate, in one sense, for they avoid superficial/pseudo friendships which come from having wealth.

Pro 19:4 Wealth brings many friends, but a poor man's friend desert him.

8.10.1 The poor are often the target for discrimination. Jam 2:2-4

Jam 2:2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in.

Jam 2:3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet,"

Jam 2:4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

8.11 The poor should in the local church have the same spiritual privileges as the wealthy.

8.12 As the Church Age evolved we find the epistles instructing believers with reference to the poor as follows.

8.13 We are to render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, we are to never think about revolution or disobeying authority.

8.13.1 When government exceeds its authority and eschews establishment principles we are to heed their mandates, for example:

8.13.2 if the government steals from the rich by requiring more than a ten percent across the board income tax and foolishly throws money at every problem, including the eradication of the world's poverty, we are to react with faithful submission.

8.14 The epistles seem to demand that each local Church address poverty; it is however a matter uniquely the province of individuals within a local Church.

8.14.1 For example, benevolent funds were to be established within each local church to care for their indigent.

1Ti 5:3 Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need.

1Ti 5:4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.

1Ti 5:5 The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in — God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help.

1Ti 5:6 But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.

1Ti 5:7 Give the people these instructions, too, so that no one may be open to blame.

Jam 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

8.14.2 It should be noted all of the assistance was based on a free will offering without pressure.

8.15 Never do we find instruction to help those who can and will not work, in fact quite the contrary. 2Th 3:11-15

2Th 3:11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies.

2Th 3:12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

2Th 3:13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.

2Th 3:14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed.

2Th 3:15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

End Lesson Taught 9-1-2004

Zechariah Lesson 70

1. Last week I reviewed our Doctrine of the Poor. When time expired we were about to see if there was any Scripture authorizing taking care of the poor in foreign lands.

2. Before we continue that study I want to provide an expanded translation of Zec 7:1-10.

Zec 7:1 And then in the 4th year of King Darius on the 4th of December 518. the Word of the Lord came to Zechariah.

Zec 7:2 And the citizens of Bethel sent to the house of the Lord Sherezer and Regem the King and his men to ask of the Lord whether they were to continue the four fasts.

Zec 7:3 So the delegation asked of the prophets and the Temple Priests who served around the altar if they should continue the fast of the fifth month as both they and the remnant in Jerusalem had done for some seventy years.

Zec 7:4 And then the word of the Lord of the armies again came to me saying.

Zec 7:5 Zechariah, this is what I want you to say to all the priests and the people of the land, when you fasted and mourned in the fifth and the seventh month, even in those seventy years were you fasting and mourning for Me, really even Me your Lord God?

Zec 7:6 Now when you were not fasting but eating and drinking were you not eating and drinking for and on behalf of yourselves?

Zec 7:7 Should you not have listened and concentrated on the words of Jehovah proclaimed by the former prophets in a day when both Jerusalem and the cities of the southern plain were experiencing prosperity?

Zec 7:8 And then the Word of The Lord came again unto me saying.

Zec 7:9 Accordingly the Lord of the armies said judge with justice, truth and grace; every man must show true compassion toward his brother.

Zec 7:10 Zechariah was then motivated by the Spirit to say, You must stop oppressing the widows, orphans, and the poor and you must stop committing mental attitude sins toward one another by thinking evil against your brothers.

3. There is no authorization in Scripture for assisting the poor in other lands; internationalism is always evil. There is one exception. We are to evangelize the entire world, however, each national entity is responsible for what occurs within their national boundaries.

4. Nationalism is one of the divine Institutions and it is Satan who weakens the nations.
Isa 14:12

5. In the year of our Lord, 1998, America faced the ultimate irony; the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were madly running away from "big government," while our nation, paradoxically rushed toward the welfare state.

6. Capitalism is taught in both the Old and New Testament and big government is never proscribed

7. Now let's see how our verse ten looks by way of expanded translation.

Expanded Translation

Zec 7:10 Zechariah was then motivated by the Spirit to say, You must stop oppressing the widows, orphans, and the poor and you must stop committing mental attitude sins toward one another by thinking evil against your brothers.

10. Now let's see God's indictment - a direct result of Israel of Zechariah's day to listen and concentrate on His Word's of warning.

KJV

Zec 7:11 But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

NIV

Zec 7:11 "But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and stopped up their ears.

Hebrew

Va Maan - And they time and time again refused

Qashav - to listen, to concentrate attentively

Va Tanah - and they turned aside

Kateph - the shoulder

Sur Reth - turning aside

Ozen Hem - their ears

Kabad - they stopped up (their ears)

Min Shama - from listening/hearing

Working Translation

Zec 7:11 And they refused to listen and concentrate and they turned aside the shoulder, they stopped up their ears and they refused to concentrate on doctrine.

Principles

1. Here is a summary of the attitude of Israel through the centuries to the ministry of the prophets as they preached faith, piety, and justice.

2. God's message had been faithfully delivered through the energizing Spirit by the hands, hearts, and mouths of his servants, the prophets (2Ch 36:16).

2Ch 36:16 But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

2Ch 36:17 He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar.

2Ch 36:18 He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the LORD'S temple and the treasures of the king and his officials.

2Ch 36:19 They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there.

2Ch 36:20 He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power.

2Ch 36:21 The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.

3. God urges them to open up their ears and concentrate on doctrine in order to avoid another bout with national discipline.

4. The use of stopping up their ears is a familiar metaphor. Let's review how ear has been used in Scripture to teach various principles.

4.1 The organ of hearing, the ear, is our guarantee of God's ability to hear.

End Lesson Taught 9-8-2004

Zechariah Lesson 72

1. Last week I finished teaching the Doctrine of The Ear and exegeted in part Zec 7:11; when time expired we were about to review the Cycles of Discipline as taught by C.I. Scofield and R.B. Thieme.

2. Before we continue that study I want to provide an expanded translation of Zec 7:1-11.

Zec 7:1 And then in the 4th year of King Darius on the 4th of December 518. the Word of the Lord came to Zechariah.

Zec 7:2 And the citizens of Bethel sent to the house of the Lord Sherezer and Regem the King and his men to ask of the Lord whether they were to continue the four fasts.

Zec 7:3 So the delegation asked of the prophets and the Temple Priests who served around the altar if they should continue the fast of the fifth month as both they and the remnant in Jerusalem had done for some seventy years.

Zec 7:4 And then the word of the Lord of the armies again came to me saying.

Zec 7:5 Zechariah, this is what I want you to say to all the priests and the people of the land, when you fasted and mourned in the fifth and the seventh month, even in those seventy years were you fasting and mourning for Me, really even Me your Lord God?

Zec 7:6 Now when you were not fasting but eating and drinking were you not eating and drinking for and on behalf of yourselves?

Zec 7:7 Should you not have listened and concentrated on the words of Jehovah proclaimed by the former prophets in a day when both Jerusalem and the cities of the southern plain were experiencing prosperity?

Zec 7:8 And then the Word of The Lord came again unto me saying.

Zec 7:9 Accordingly the Lord of the armies said judge with justice, truth and grace; every man must show true compassion toward his brother.

Zec 7:10 Zechariah was then motivated by the Spirit to say, You must stop oppressing the widows, orphans, and the poor and you must stop committing mental attitude sins toward one another by thinking evil against your brothers.

Zec 7:11 Before the exile our forefathers refused to listen and concentrate on the Word of The Lord; they turned aside and refused to shoulder the gates of praise and accordingly made grievous the hearing of doctrine.

3. Let's review some of that learned and then we will pick up with new material.

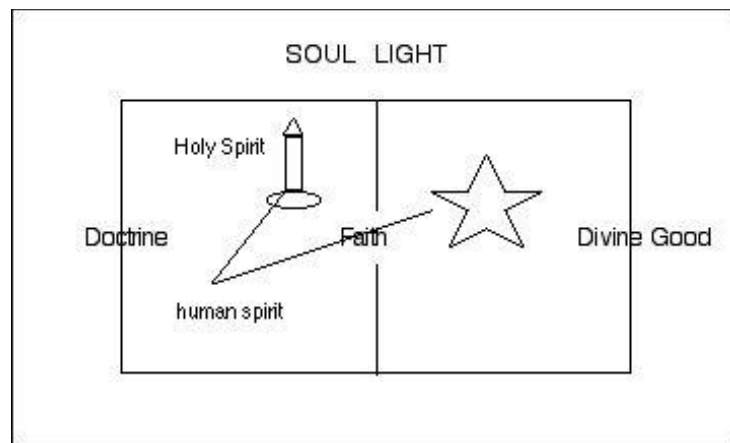
4. Zec 7:12 has been translated:

NIV

Zec 7:12 They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry.

Principles

1. The pre-exilic generation shrugged off Bible Doctrine, they closed their ears, they hardened their hearts and they refused to listen to the long line of prophets and communicators of His Word.
2. Their hearts were made like flint or diamonds (Jer 17:1; Eze 3:9).
3. The Hebrew teaches their hearts were so hard it would cut rocks, so hard that even God could not engrave His words on their hearts.
4. Zechariah warns his generation not to make the same mistakes.
5. Without doctrine it is impossible to please God and Israel had decided negative volition toward God is better than positive volition, and though they had plenty of left lobe doctrine they had no right lobe doctrine.



6. Therefore says God, there came a great wrath - the fifth cycle of discipline.
 - 6.1 The term "fifth cycle" was coined by R.B. Thieme to describe the last in a sequence of divine discipline imposed on a nation.
 - 6.1.1 Extensive and continued negative volition toward God causes the national discipline.

6.2 As to whether there are exactly five cycles of discipline is certainly problematic, however, we do know there are definitely several warning steps culminating in a final stage characterized by military defeat, dispersion and demise of the national entity.

6.3 Nations like individuals are disciplined in time when they reject God.

Hos 4:1 Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land.

Hos 4:2 There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.

Hos 4:3 Because of this the land mourns, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are dying.

Hos 4:4 "But let no man bring a charge, let no man accuse another, for your people are like those who bring charges against a priest.

Hos 4:5 You stumble day and night, and the prophets stumble with you. So I will destroy your mother--

Hos 4:6 my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priest nation; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.

6.4 For individuals our doctrine of discipline tells of a warning and intensive phase and even a sin which would seem to lead to death.

6.4.1 Believers are disciplined for either carnality or reversionism or some combination of both.

Heb 12:5 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,

Heb 12:6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

6.4.2 If discipline comes for carnality the discipline is canceled by the use of rebound at least to the extent that discipline for punishment is turned into discipline for "blessing."

1Co 11:31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.

6.4.3 Discipline for reversionism or evil requires a change in thinking and the associated halt in the aberrant behavior.

Rom 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

6.5 There are for the individual believer stages of discipline just as there would also seem to be stages of discipline for the national entity.

6.5.1 There is a warning stage where God presents a gentle reminder and if there is no response then the severity is increased.

Rev 3:19 "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent."

Rev 3:20 "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."

6.5.2 That there is an ultimate dying stage would seem to be taught by what many call for lack of a better term "the sin unto death."

1Jo 5:16 If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that.

1Jo 5:17 All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.

6.6 Israel as the only Priest Nation received the ultimate national discipline in first B. C. 586 and later in A. D. 70. Client nations, like Israel, are subject to the curse of the five cycles when they digress into national reversionism.

6.7 Client nations today would seem to be culpable; they are expected to have:

6.7.1 a large pivot of positive believers,

6.7.2 a significant evangelical effort both at home and abroad,

6.7.3 pro-Semitic policies for ethnic Jews living in their borders,

6.7.4 establishment principles which protect and support the four divine institutions.

6.8 When nations fail such principles, divine discipline in stages falls upon them.

6.9 The root cause of divine discipline for a nation is "a lack of knowledge" of the Word of God and the implementation of its principles.

Hos 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

6.10 As we look at God's dealing with Israel and His warnings there are cycles resulting finally in a stage called by Col Thieme the "fifth cycle."

6.11 There are many passages outlining the process but the most extensive can be found in Deu 28:58-67 and Lev 26:14-39.

6.12 As in most prophetic Scriptures, the isagogics must be interpreted in the light of modernity.

6.13 Some of the caveats of Scripture translate readily like famine, lack of rain etc. but descriptions of being eaten by beast might better be interpreted in the light of internecine carnage or the ravages of war.

6.14 Let's first look at Deu 28:58-67 to get the concept of God's promise to deal with a disobedient Israel.

Deu 28:58 If you do not carefully follow all the words of this law, which are written in this book, do not revere this glorious and awesome name--the LORD your God--

Deu 28:59 the LORD will send fearful plagues on you and your descendants, harsh and prolonged disasters, and severe and lingering illnesses.

Deu 28:60 He will bring upon you all the diseases of Egypt that you dreaded, and they will cling to you.

Deu 28:61 The LORD will also bring on you every kind of sickness and disaster not recorded in this Book of the Law, until you are destroyed.

Deu 28:62 You who were as numerous as the stars in the sky will be left but few in number, because you did not obey the LORD your God.

Deu 28:63 Just as it pleased the LORD to make you prosper and increase in number, so it will please him to ruin and destroy you. You will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess.

Deu 28:64 Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods--gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known.

Deu 28:65 Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart.

Deu 28:66 You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life.

Deu 28:67 In the morning you will say, "If only it were evening!" and in the evening, "If only it were morning!"--because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see.

6.15 Col R. B. Thieme as earlier mentioned has chosen to organize the Scriptures found in Lev 26:14-39 into 5 cycles of discipline as follows:

6.15.1 Cycle One Lev 26:14-17

Lev 26:14 But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments;
Lev 26:15 And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant:
Lev 26:16 I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning fever, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.
Lev 26:17 And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.

6.15.2 Cycle Two Lev 26:18-20

Lev 26:18 And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.
Lev 26:19 And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass:
Lev 26:20 And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits.

6.15.3 Cycle Three Lev 26:21-22

Lev 26:21 And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins.
Lev 26:22 I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate.

6.15.4 Cycle Four Lev 26:23-26

Lev 26:23 And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me;
Lev 26:24 Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins.
Lev 26:25 And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.
Lev 26:26 And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied.

6.15.5 Cycle Five Lev 26:27-39

Lev 26:27 And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me;
Lev 26:28 Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.

Lev 26:29 And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.

Lev 26:30 And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you.

Lev 26:31 And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odors.

Lev 26:32 And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it.

Lev 26:33 And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

Lev 26:34 Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths.

Lev 26:35 As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it.

Lev 26:36 And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth.

Lev 26:37 And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies.

Lev 26:38 And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up.

Lev 26:39 And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them.

6.16 Israel today finds itself under the fifth cycle and there they will remain until our Lord returns. It all began in A.D. 70 when Rome destroyed Jerusalem; their discipline will continue in spades during the seven years of the Tribulation. In the seven years of the Tribulation Israel will receive far greater discipline than anything as yet experienced.

6.17 Twice in history Israel has suffered as follows:

6.17.1 There was great famine in the land.

6.17.2 The people ate their sons and their daughters.

6.17.3 Their places of worship were destroyed.

6.17.4 A dispersion to foreign lands occurred.

6.17.5 The land received a long awaited sabbath year.

6.17.6 In their dispersion the Jews will become timorous, a fallen leaf will cause them to run in fear.

6.17.7 They will flee the sword even though no one is pursuing.

6.17.8 They will be devoured by the gentiles in those foreign lands.

6.18 In fairness to C. I. Scofield he was the first to classify and organize Lev 26:14-39 into degrees of discipline for Israel.

6.19 Scofield in his original Bible elected six degrees or cycles of discipline as opposed to five.

1st - Distress Lev 26:14-17

2nd - Drought Lev 26:18-20

3rd - Beasts Lev 26:21-22

4th - Disease Lev 26:23-26

5th - Famine Lev 26:27-31

6th - Dispersion Lev 26:32-39

6.20 Whichever of these great expositors and organizers of the Word you choose there is no doubt a warning to all national entities today.

End Lesson Taught 9-22-20

Zechariah Lesson 73

1. Last week I exegeted Zec 7:12; and then I taught the Cycles of Discipline as taught by C. I. Scofield and R.B. Thieme.

2. Before we continue I want to provide an expanded translation of Zec 7:1-11.

Zec 7:1 And then in the 4th year of King Darius on the 4th of December 518. the Word of the Lord came to Zechariah.

Zec 7:2 And the citizens of Bethel sent to the house of the Lord Sherezer and Regem the King and his men to ask of the Lord whether they were to continue the four fasts.

Zec 7:3 So the delegation asked of the prophets and the Temple Priests who served around the altar if they should continue the fast of the fifth month as both they and the remnant in Jerusalem had done for some seventy years.

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Zec 7:6 Now when you were not fasting but eating and drinking were you not eating and drinking for and on behalf of yourselves?

Zec 7:7 Should you not have listened and concentrated on the words of Jehovah proclaimed by the former prophets in a day when both Jerusalem and the cities of the southern plain were experiencing prosperity?

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Zec 7:11 Before the exile our forefathers refused to listen and concentrate on the Word of The Lord; they turned aside and refused to shoulder the gates of praise and accordingly made grievous the hearing of doctrine.

3. Let's review some of that learned and then we will pick up with new material.

4. Zec 7:12 has been translated:

NIV

Zec 7:12 They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry.

Principles

1. The pre-exilic generation shrugged off Bible Doctrine, they closed their ears, they hardened their hearts and they refused to listen to the long line of prophets and communicators of His Word.

2. Their hearts were made like flint or diamonds (Jer 17:1; Eze 3:9).

3. The Hebrew teaches their hearts were so hard it would cut rocks, so hard that even God could not engrave His words on their hearts.

4. Zechariah warns his generation not to make the same mistakes.

5. Without doctrine it is impossible to please God and Israel had decided negative volition toward God is better than positive volition, and though they had plenty of left lobe doctrine they had no right lobe doctrine.

6. Therefore says God, there came a great wrath - the fifth cycle of discipline.

6.1 The term "fifth cycle" was coined by R. B. Thieme to describe the last in a sequence of divine discipline imposed on a nation. Extensive and continued negative volition toward God causes the national discipline.

6.2 As to whether there are exactly five cycles of discipline is certainly problematic, however, we do know there are definitely several warning steps culminating in a final stage characterized by military defeat, dispersion and demise of the national entity.

6.3 Nations like individuals are disciplined in time when they reject God.

6.4 Israel as the only Priest Nation received the ultimate national discipline in first 586 B.C. and later in A.D. 70. Client nations, like Israel, are subject to the curse of the five cycles when they digress into national reversionism.

6.5 Client nations are culpable; they are expected to have: a large pivot of positive believers, a significant evangelical effort both at home and abroad, Pro-Semitic policies for ethnic Jews living in their borders and establishment principles which protect and support the four divine institutions.

6.6 When nations fail such principles, divine discipline in stages falls upon them.

6.7 The root cause of divine discipline for a nation is "a lack of knowledge" of the Word of God and the implementation of its principles.

Hos 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

6.8 As we look at God's dealing with Israel and His warnings there are cycles resulting finally in a stage called by Col Thieme the "fifth cycle."

6.9 There are many passages outlining the process but the most extensive can be found in Deu 28:58-67 and Lev 26:14-39.

6.10 As in most prophetic Scriptures, the isagogics must be interpreted in the light of modernity.

6.11 Some of the caveats of Scripture translate readily like famine, lack of rain etc. but descriptions of being eaten by beast might better be interpreted in the light of internecine carnage or the ravages of war.

6.12 Israel today finds itself under the fifth cycle and there they will remain until our Lord returns. It all began in A.D. 70 when Rome destroyed Jerusalem; their discipline will continue in spades during the seven years of the Tribulation. In the seven years of the Tribulation Israel will receive far greater discipline than anything as yet experienced.

6.13 Twice in history Israel has suffered as follows: there was great famine in the land, the people ate their sons and their daughters, their places of worship were destroyed, a dispersion to foreign lands occurred, in their dispersion the Jews became timorous, a fallen leaf caused them to run in fear and they fled the sword even though no one was pursuing and they were twice devoured by the gentiles in foreign lands.

6.14 In fairness to C. I. Scofield he was the first to classify and organize Lev 26:14-39 into degrees of discipline for Israel.

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5th - Famine Lev 26:27-31

6th - Dispersion Lev 26:32-39

6.16 Whichever of these great expositors and organizers of the Word you choose there is no doubt a warning to all national entities today.

6.17 We, as church age believers, must recognize the importance of being part of the pivot and thus sustain our country's client nation status.

6.18 The key to avoiding national discipline is the maintenance of a pivot and the minimizing of a spin off.

7. Zechariah proclaims: When repeated warnings and loving entreaties fail, there remains the wrath of God for the impenitent. He seems to be warning again that an impenitent nation should expect national discipline.

8. Now let us see how our verse looks by way of expanded translation.

Expanded Translation

Zec 7:12 And these same pre-exilic people set their right lobes against God, their hearts were as hard as diamonds; the hearing of the Words of the Lord which the Lord of the Armies had sent by the hand of the former prophets they rejected out of hand and then a great wrath came from the Lord of the Armies.

10. The Lord continues evaluate both people and nations when His overtures are rejected.

KJV

Zec 7:13 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:

NIV

Zec 7:13 "'When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen,' says the LORD Almighty.

Hebrew

Va Hayah - And it came to pass

Ke Asher Qara - just as that which God communicated or called/designated

Va Lo Shama - and they did not listen

Qara Vu - to His communication

Va Ken Lo Shama - and so I shall not listen

Amar - said

Yehovah Tsava - the Lord of the Armies

Working Translation: And so it came to pass that as they listened not to the communication, so when they called I did not listen said the Lord of the Armies.

Principles

1. Verses thirteen and fourteen describe further results of the refusal of the pre exilic generation to listen and obey the Word of the Lord.

2. By so doing, the Lord, speaking through Zechariah warns the generation of Zechariah's day to take heed lest they too fall.

3. Additionally, by way of tertiary application, we too must beware of the consequences of having no pivot - the result as we have just studied, would be the loss of our client nation status and national discipline.

4. Besides the general result of God's chastening upon the pre-exilic fathers (vs. 12) Zechariah names three resultant calamities overtaking any disobedient generation but particularly emphasized is that which occurred to the pre-exilic generation - a portent of that to come if Zechariah's 518 B.C. generation does not shape-up and listen:

4.1 a loss of prayer effectiveness or better said powerless prayer life; Zec 7:13

4.2 a scattering among the nations; Zec 7:14

4.3 and a desolation of the land of Israel. Zec 7:14

Zec 7:12 They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry.

Zec 7:13 "'When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen,' says the LORD Almighty.

Zec 7:14 And I will scatter them among all the nations, which they have not known. And the land was made desolate after them, so that no one passed through or returned, and they made the pleasant land desolation.

5. The inevitable result of disobedience was a powerlessness in prayer.

6. Verse thirteen begins "Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried." The conclusion occurred to the forefathers and we studied the cycles of discipline which fell. Why? Because they didn't listen to God's warnings.

6.1 The He in the phrase He cried is God Himself.

7. Therefore ... as He (God) cried and they would not hear is the protasis followed by the apodosis introduced by the adverb so. The apodosis: so they cried, and I would not hear.

8. As Zechariah describes how the captivity came about as the result of the failure to hear the Word of the Lord, the prophet describes it as a merited discipline.

8.1 The great wrath of the Lord was manifested in their seventy-year dispersion.

9. During those 70 years God turned a deaf ear to their prayers as they had previously turned a deaf ear to the overtures of God given by the prophets, priests and kings.

10. Particularly did the pre-exilic generation turn a deaf ear to the prophet Jeremiah. Jer 11:11, 14 and Jer 14:12.

Jer 11:11 Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them.

Jer 11:14 Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.

Jer 14:12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.

11. Isaiah some 100 years earlier cried out a warning in Isa 1:15; using the same vocabulary; some 250 years earlier Solomon in Pro 1:27 and 28 warned when distress comes upon you then you will call upon me but I will not hear.

Isa 1:15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Pro 1:27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

Pro 1:28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

12. There is of course application for us. Specifically when we do not name our sins to God our prayers are not heard and if we hate the Word our prayers are an abomination to God.

Psa 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

Pro 28:9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

13. Now for an expanded translation of Zec 7:13.

Expanded Translation

Zec 7:13 Therefore what God promised happened; because the pre-exilic generation did not listen to My Word, so accordingly said the Lord of the Armies when the Babylonians came, they prayed and I did not listen.

14. Now let's continue with a description of the last of the three curses pronounced upon the pre-exilic Jews - a scattering among the gentiles and a desolation of the land.

KJV

Zec 7:14 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.

NIV

Zec 7:14 "I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations, where they were strangers. The land was left so desolate behind them that no one could come or go. This is how they made the pleasant land desolate."

Hebrew

Va Saar - And as a result I shall scatter them repeatedly and forcefully

Al Kal Ha Goy - among all the nations

Asher Lo Yada - whom they know not

Va Ha Arets - and therefore the land
Shamem - it shall be wasted
Achar Hem - after them
Min Avar - from no one passing over
Va Shuv - and from returning
Va Sum - and they inhabit
Erets Chamad - the pleasant land
Le Shamah - was wasted

Working Translation: But I scattered them among all the gentile nations which they knew not, then the land from which they were scattered was desolate and no one was seen coming from or going into the land and the beautiful and desirable land was desolate and wasted.

End Lesson Taught 9-29-2004

Zechariah Lesson 74

1. Last week I completed the teaching of The Doctrine of The Five Cycles of Discipline, exegeted Zec 7:13 and when time expired we were analyzing Zec 7:14.

2. Before we continue our exegesis I want to provide an expanded translation of Zec 7:12 and 13.

Zec 7:12 Your ancestors, pre-exilic Israel, set their right lobes against Me, their hearts were as hard as diamonds; the Words of the Lord of the Armies sent by the hand of the prophets were rejected out of hand; accordingly a great wrath came upon them.
Zec 7:13 That which I had promised came upon them. The Babylonians came and conquered; Israel prayed for deliverance but I chose not to hear, I would not even listen.

3. Let us review some of that learned and then we will pick up with new material at Zec 7:14 on page 2.

4. The pre-exilic generation shrugged off Bible Doctrine, they closed their ears, they hardened their hearts and they refused to listen to the long line of prophets and communicators of God's Word.

4.1 Zechariah warns his generation not to make the same mistakes.

5. Without doctrine it is impossible to please God and Israel had decided negative volition toward God is better than positive volition, and though they had plenty of left lobe doctrine they had no right lobe doctrine.

6. Therefore says God, there came a great wrath - the fifth cycle of discipline.
7. Verse fourteen describes further the results of the refusal of the pre-exilic generation to listen and obey the Word of the Lord.
8. By so doing, the Lord, speaking through Zechariah warns the generation of Zechariah's day to take heed lest they too fall.
9. Additionally, by way of tertiary application, we too must beware of the consequences of having no pivot - the result as we have just studied, would be the loss of our client nation status and national discipline.
10. Now let's continue with a description of the last of the three curses pronounced upon the pre-exilic Jews - a scattering among the gentiles and a desolation of the land.

NIV

Zec 7:14 "I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations, where they were strangers. The land was left so desolate behind them that no one could come or go. This is how they made the pleasant land desolate."

Principles

1. Up to Zechariah's time Israel had been scattered primarily to Assyria and Babylonia.
2. If the text is to be given its full significance and plain sense, we must look to the world-wide dispersion of the Jews in A.D. 70 and the major dispersion to come during the Tribulation.
3. As a consequence of their rejection of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, came the greatest exhibition of obdurate disobedience to the Word of God and his messengers.
4. The phrase no man passed through the land is an idiom.
5. The land that had formerly been a delight was to be forsaken and without inhabitant. This idiomatically describes economic inactivity.
6. Though the Babylonians accomplished the destruction, Zechariah charges Israel with the responsibility; her sin is declared to be the procuring cause.
7. We begin verse fourteen with a **Vaw** consecutive which tells us of a logical result. The inevitable result of Israel's failure to hear and apply doctrine was their dispersion.
8. The verb translated scatter is **Saar** from a root meaning to storm, to excite, to inflame or to rage. The verb in the Piel signifies I the Lord will whirl or storm them away, i.e., hurl them by a storm wind upon the nations.

9. The expression is accordingly very strong and denotes a violent scattering like a mighty wind, a hurricane or tornado.

10. The clause describing where the Lord scattered His disobedient people is better I will scatter them among the nations whom (a translation from Asher) they did not know. What made the captivity so unbearable was to be hurled out among nations who were complete strangers to Israel. Deu 28:36; Jer 16:13

Deu 28:36 The LORD shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone.

Jer 16:13 So I will throw you out of this land into a land neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.'

11. A further detail of the desolation is given by Zechariah in the expression, from one passing out and coming back in, where the preposition **Min** is used as a negative particle in the sense of a negative result - so that no one going out and coming in pictures complete emptiness and desolation.

12. The same peculiar expression is used of Alexander's conquest in Zec 9:8. There is little doubt verse eight in Zechariah nine refers to Alexander and his sparing of Judah.

Zec 9:8 And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.

12.1 Wycliffe in his commentary has written of this verse:

"I will encamp about mine house. Alexander passed by Jerusalem more than once on his campaigns, and although he scourged the Samaritans, he did the Jews no harm ... By the prophetic law of suggestion Zechariah passes from the deliverance in Alexander's time to speak of Israel's final deliverance from all oppressors."

12.2 Unger in his commentary on Zec 9:8 writes:

"The prophecy of Jerusalem's escape from Alexander -- the harbinger of a future complete deliverance under the Messiah. The army envisioned is that of Alexander, and the promise maintains that the Jews were not to be molested on the army's march either to or from Egypt. The literal Hebrew reads ... And I will encamp around My house against an army when it is passing through and returning."

13. It was the father's sins that caused the captivity and the desolation of their land. The land of Canaan in its beauty and prosperity is graphically named the pleasant land: (**Erets Chamad**) meaning literally land of desire, delight as reflected in Jer 3:19. I sought how I could set you among my sons, and give you pleasant land, a heritage most beautiful of all nations.

Jer 3:19 "I myself said, "How gladly would I treat you like sons and give you a desirable land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation.' I thought you would call me 'Father' and not turn away from following me.

Jer 3:20 But like a woman unfaithful to her husband, so you have been unfaithful to me, O house of Israel," declares the LORD.

14. Daniel and the psalmist also use this terminology in Dan 11:16 and 41 and Psa 106:24.

Dan 11:16 But he (Antiochus the Great) that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed.

Dan 11:41 He (the eschatological King of the North) shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.

Psa 106:24 Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word:

15. Now let's summarize that which we have learned in chapter seven.

15.1 Did the delegation from Bethel have their question answered concerning the four fast? In one sense yes and in another no. By diverting their minds from the insignificant point of fasting a far greater question was first brought up and then answered.

15.2 In being concerned about observing or not observing a lifeless ritual of fasting are they thereby giving evidence that they were beginning to react to the Word of God in the same way their fathers did? Zechariah answered yes.

15.3 Zechariah then declares his contemporaries should take heed. Observing the fast days says the prophet was an unimportant matter. Obeying the Word of God was the all-important question facing them.

16. Let's close out our study of chapter seven with a translation of Zec 7:12-14.

Zec 7:12 Your ancestors, pre-exilic Israel, set their right lobes against Me, their hearts were as hard as diamonds; the Words of the Lord of the Armies sent by the hand of the prophets were rejected out of hand; accordingly a great wrath came upon them.

Zec 7:13 That which I had promised came upon them. The Babylonians came and conquered; Israel prayed for deliverance but I chose not to hear, I would not even listen.
Zec 7:14 Because of their rejection of My Word, I scattered them among the nations of the world; I dispersed them among many nations which they knew not and the land from which they were scattered became desolate and no one was seen coming from or going into the land for it lay desolate and wasted.

17. Now let's get an overview of chapter eight. Unger has titled this chapter "When The Fasts Become Joyful Feasts." As we will see the fast become feasts in the Millennium with Jesus ruling as King of kings and Lord of lords.

18. We need to first establish an outline of the chapter. Israel's eventual restoration to full millennial blessing is clearly described in chapter eight.

Outline:

I. The present partial restoration is only a harbinger of the eventual full restoration when Christ returns.

A. The future full restoration is assured by the Word of God and the love of God.
Zec 8:1-2

Zec 8:1 Again the word of the LORD Almighty came to me.
Zec 8:2 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her."

B. The results of the full restoration of Israel is taught in Zec 8:3-6.

Zec 8:3 This is what the LORD says: "I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain."

Zec 8:4 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with cane in hand because of his age.

Zec 8:5 The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there."

Zec 8:6 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "It may seem marvelous to the remnant of this people at that time, but will it seem marvelous to me?" declares the LORD Almighty.

C. The Promise of a future regathering and full restoration is repeated in Zec 8:7-8.

Zec 8:7 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "I will save my people from the countries of the east and the west.

Zec 8:8 I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God."

II. Encouragement amid the woes of the present partial restoration is promised.
Zec 8:9-17.

Zec 8:9 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "You who now hear these words spoken by the prophets who were there when the foundation was laid for the house of the LORD Almighty, let your hands be strong so that the temple may be built.

Zec 8:10 Before that time there were no wages for man or beast. No one could go about his business safely because of his enemy, for I had turned every man against his neighbor.

Zec 8:11 But now I will not deal with the remnant of this people as I did in the past," declares the LORD Almighty.

Zec 8:12 "The seed will grow well, the vine will yield its fruit, the ground will produce its crops, and the heavens will drop their dew. I will give all these things as an inheritance to the remnant of this people.

Zec 8:13 As you have been an object of cursing among the nations, O Judah and Israel, so will I save you, and you will be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong."

Zec 8:14 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Just as I had determined to bring disaster upon you and showed no pity when your fathers angered me," says the LORD Almighty,

Zec 8:15 "so now I have determined to do good again to Jerusalem and Judah. Do not be afraid.

Zec 8:16 These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts;

Zec 8:17 do not plot evil against your neighbor, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this," declares the LORD.

III. Full future restoration to millennial joy and divine favor is promised. Zec 8:18-23.

Zec 8:18 Again the word of the LORD Almighty came to me.

Zec 8:19 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months will become joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals for Judah. Therefore love truth and peace."

Zec 8:20 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come,

Zec 8:21 and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, 'Let us go at once to entreat the LORD and seek the LORD Almighty. I myself am going.'

Zec 8:22 And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him."

Zec 8:23 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'"

End Lesson Taught 10-6-2004

