

**Zech. 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;*

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

**Zech. 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?*

The time marker indicates that almost two years have elapsed since Zechariah's night of visions of the previous chapters. At this time some men came as representatives of the people to pray before the Lord at the temple. They had a question for the priests and prophets—"Should we continue to mourn and fast each summer on the anniversary of the Temple's destruction, as we have done for so many years?" (NLT)

**Zech. 7:4** Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying,

**Zech. 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?*

**Zech. 7:6** *And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?*

**Zech. 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?*

The fifth month mourned the destruction of the temple.

The seventh month marked the murder of Gedalia, the righteous governor of Judah (2Kings 25).

The Lord gives His answer through the prophet Zechariah. Again, as He often does, He frames His answer in the form of questions. (my paraphrasing)

- Was this fasting and mourning done to honor me?
- When you did participate in my feasts, weren't you participating with selfish motives?
- Shouldn't you have responded to the message of My word as delivered by My faithful prophets before Jerusalem was destroyed?

These were questions meant to cause them to look into their own hearts. They were so bound by the traditions of men, that they had a hard time directing their thinking to true worship and adoration of YHWH. The fact that they totally disregarded God's true prophets and listened instead to the false prophets declared the truth that their hearts were hard and their focus on self.

The church of today would do well to ask themselves the same questions. If we would honestly examine our hearts and look at the motives behind what we do, I believe we would see great revival in the church. The church today must learn to discern between the true prophets and false prophets—those that teach the truth God's word and those that pervert its teaching. The only acceptable basis upon which to make that discernment is the truth of God's word as set forth in the Bible. I'm afraid that, just as in the days preceding the Babylonian captivity in

Judah, those in the church today are giving more and more heed to the message of the false prophets / teachers.

**Zech. 7:8 And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying,**

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

**Zech. 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.**

God's message for the people as delivered by Zechariah was clear:

- *Execute true judgment.* - This would be an admonishment to be fair and unbiased; to be righteous in judgment. I truly think that the courts in America today are dominated by the almighty dollar and serve to preserve the power of the elite. Fair, unbiased and righteous judgment makes a rare appearance in our courts today.
- *Show mercy and compassion to your fellowman.* - This would indicate to me an attitude of heart. It's doing unto others as you would have them do to you—not, do unto others as they do unto you. Our culture today is so focused on "me" and what "I deserve." We are taught to act so as to receive in return. It's no wonder that people of today have a hard time believing in God; unconditional love is just not a reasonable concept according to today's thinking.
- *Be kind to the widows, orphans, foreigners, and the poor.* - This type of action takes the focus off self and focuses on helping those less fortunate than you. It's giving help to those who need help. It makes you realize your own blessings and should result in praising and thanking God. It's a way of demonstrating to others the unconditional love of God.
- *Do not think evil things about your brother or do not think about doing evil things to your brother.* - I think both would apply. Again, today's culture is rampant with this disease of the heart. From terrorists to gangs to elitist power groups this attitude has grown to include large groups of people; it's not primarily characteristic of individual criminals anymore.

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

**Zech. 7:12 Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.**

This was the same message God had consistently delivered to their forefathers through His faithful prophets—beginning with Moses.

Deut. 10:16-20 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. For the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

Is. 1:16-17 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Jer. 7:5-7 For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; *If* ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.

Jer. 22:3 Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.

Hos. 12:6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

God is declaring that He was faithful to instruct His people and warn His people and call them to repentance through the faithful message of His prophets, but the people refused to listen. Their hearts were stubborn and hard; they refused to pay attention to God's word. THEREFORE, God had to judge them in wrath for their sin.

**Zech. 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:**

**Zech. 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.**

The Lord gives the people a word picture—Just as the people refused to listen to My prophets as they cried out my message, so I refused to hear them when they finally pleaded for deliverance. I scattered them throughout the nations on earth. God is carefully declaring that although He used other nations to carry out His judgment, it was His judgment. Those nations would never have been allowed to touch “the apple of His eye” without His express empowerment. That judgment resulted in desolating the land of its people and its produce.

There is a serious warning in these verses. There comes a point when repentance is not an option. God's righteousness demands judgment. Just because He is longsuffering, doesn't mean He is any less righteous or that He is impotent. The important truth to remember is that we cannot presume on God's patience and compassion.