

Zechariah Chapter 7

Verses 7:1 – 8:23

The four messages:

All four messages came “in the fourth year of king Darius”, two years after the “word” came to Zechariah (1:1, 7).

The precise date is “the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu”, the Babylonian name for the month, the last part of November and first part of December.

As a result of the night visions which described the future of Israel.

Including the subjugation of her enemies, the final re-gathering to the Land, her cleansing, restoration, and the coming of Messiah and His kingdom, the Jews were greatly encouraged and comforted.

The temple was more than half done.

All obstacles to the construction were removed by the decree of Darius confirming the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 6:1-14).

Now that the temple was being finished, they were sent to inquire of the LORD and the priests whether they needed to continue the fast.

The question is answered negatively (in chapter 7), with two messages and positively (in chapter 8), with two messages.

Each of the 4 messages was given to impress upon the people the need to live righteously.

As (with chapters 1 to 6), the prophet began historically and then moved prophetically to the time of the Second Advent of Christ.

Zechariah 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;"

“The fourth year of king Darius” (Nov./Dec. 518 B.C.), two years after Zechariah’s first message (1:1), and the night visions (1:7), and two years before the temple was completed.

The ninth month would be about December on our calendar.

This is about 2 years after Zechariah had his visions.

This is a Word from God.

Zechariah 7:2 "When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regem-melech, and their men, to pray before the LORD,"

“When they”:

Beth-el:

The town of Beth-el was 12 miles north of Jerusalem.

Since the return from Babylon, the Jews had rebuilt and re-inhabited Beth-el (Ezra 2:28; Neh. 7:32).

“Sherezer and Regem-melech” bear Babylonian names showing that they were exiles returned from Babylon.

It appears that Sherezer and Regem-melech came to Jerusalem to the house of God to pray before the LORD.

They had retained their Assyrian names, when they came back from captivity.

They seemed to be the leaders and were accompanied by other men.

They thought of Jerusalem as being the center of worship.

Zechariah 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?"

“Weep in the fifth month, separating”:

The Day of Atonement was the only annual fast required by God’s law (Lev. 23:27), and other occasional fasts were called for by God (Joel 1:12, 14).

The fall of Jerusalem was remembered by 4 fasts (2 Kings 25; Jer. 39:1-4, 41; 52:13), in the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months (see note on 8:19).

Because the temple was burned in the fifth month (July – August), that fast was considered the most serious and thus the delegation uses it as the test case (2 Kings 25:8; Jer. 52:12).

They had kept this wailing and fasting for “many years,” but it seemed only a wearisome ritual in light of the present prosperity.

It seemed, they had set aside the 5th month to mourn their captivity.

This was a time of fasting and praying.

They were inquiring if they should continue with this, now that they are no longer captives.

The priests in the house of the LORD could give them answers from God, because God spoke through the priests and the prophets to the people.

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

Upon the sending of this embassy, and upon putting this question.

This is saying, that God answered them through words that came from Zechariah's mouth.

Verses 5-6

“Did ye at all fast unto me”: Zechariah pointed out that they were not fasting out of genuine sorrow and repentance, but out of self-pity (Isa. 1:10-15; 58:3-9).

Zechariah 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?"

“Seventh month”:

This fast mourned the death of Gedaliah, the governor appointed by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:22-26; Jer. chapter 41), after the fall of Jerusalem (in 586 B.C.).

Why had they fasted?

Notice, God added the fast of the seventh month, which had been done because of the murder of Gedaliah, a Jewish governor of Mizpeh.

Certainly, the 7th month fast was not for God.

The fifth month fast was also, for themselves, and not for God.

They fasted and prayed that God would take them out of captivity.

They should have been repenting and fasting, because of the sorrow they had brought to God.

These fasts were not for God at all.

Zechariah 7:6 "And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat [for yourselves], and drink [for yourselves]?"

"And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink":

Either at common meals, or at their festivals.

"Did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves":

Only for their own refreshment and pleasure, and not for the glory of God; though that ought to be the principal end in eating and drinking (1 Cor. 10:31).

Even their eating and drinking was for themselves.

They did not observe God's dietary laws.

They ate the food of the heathen nation.

This food was for self.

Verses 7-14

This is the second of the 4 messages in answer to the question (verse 3).

Harkening back to his opening call (1:4), and to the warnings of earlier prophets (Isa. 1:11-17; Isa. 58:1-7; Amos 5:10-15).

The prophet alerts the delegation to produce the fruits of righteousness that demonstrate obedience to God's Word (verses 9-10).

And to revisit the actions of their fathers who deliberately rejected God's Word (11-12a), which activated the fury of God against them (verse 12b; Deut. 28:15-68; 2 Chron. 36:14-16).

Zechariah 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?"

"Words which the LORD hath cried":

The important matter is not ritual, but obedience.

It is obedience to God's Word that brought in the past great joy, peace, and prosperity to Israel, and that covered the Land during the time of David and Solomon.

If the present generation in Zechariah's time substitutes ritual for obedience, they too will lose the joy, peace and prosperity they were enjoying.

"The south and the plain":

A reference to the area south of Beersheba and the Mediterranean coastal plain, encompassing the land from south to west.

God never would accept ceremonies that were ritualistic in nature without their hearts being in it. God would not accept sacrifices that were done of obligation.

If their hearts were not in it, God did not want their sacrifices.

God wanted their love and obedience, not a formal carrying out of the law.

1 Sam. 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."

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

Giving him orders to repeat what the former prophets had said, and to urge the same things on the people which they had before rejected.

The rejection of which had issued in their ruin.

This is a break from the past Word of God.

Zechariah 7:9 "Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother:"

"Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying":

The same things as he had before.

For the things following are ever in force, and always to be attended to, and to be regarded and preferred before anything merely ritual and ceremonial.

And especially before the traditions and commandments of men, of which nature the above fasts were.

"Execute true judgment":

Or, "judge judgment of truth".

This is addressed to the judges of the people, that when any cause came before them between man and man, that they would judge righteously, according to the law of God.

And, without respect to persons, pass sentence as the truth of the case required.

"And show mercy and compassion every man to his brother":

Whether in want of food, raiment, or in whatsoever distress, whether of body or mind.

Which is much more acceptable to God than any legal sacrifices, or outward abstinences and humiliations (Hosea 6:6).

This is saying that God's commandments have never changed.

Most of the Ten Commandments are speaking of doing what is right to your neighbors.

Jesus gave a good explanation of this in the following.

Matt. 22:39 "And the second [is] like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Zechariah 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."

"And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor":

Such as those who have no husband to provide for them.

Nor father and mother to care for them.

And are in a strange land, where they have no friends or acquaintance, and are poor, and cannot help themselves.

Laws of this kind were frequently inculcated among the Jews (see Deut. 24:14).

"And let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart":

Thoughts of evil are sinful and forbidden by the law of God.

As well as actions, which agrees with our Lord's sense of the law (Matt. 5:22; see Lev. 19:17).

The one thing that separates God's people from the rest of the world is the law of God.

God teaches compassion for others.

He helped everyone, when He was on the earth.

He expects all Christians to do the same things He did, when He was here.

A Christian is a follower of, and a believer in, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God is telling these Israelites, if they are to be counted as His, they must treat others as God treats them.

He especially wants them to help the widows and the orphans.

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

"But they refused to hearken":

That is, the Jews before the captivity, refusal to give heed to the above exhortations, and obey the voice of God in them.

"And pulled away the shoulder":

From serving the Lord, and supporting his interest.

Or "they gave", or presented, "a rebellious shoulder".

A stubborn one, that slides back, like a backsliding or stubborn heifer, that will not take of the yoke (Hosea 4:16).

So these could not bear the yoke of the law, nor the burden of duty; nor suffer the words of exhortation, or receive the admonitions given them.

"And stopped their ears, that they should not hear":

Like the deaf adder (Psalm 58:4), they would not hear, and pretended they could not; which was an instance of contempt to the speakers.

These were rebellious people who did not want to be instructed of God, and that was what was always getting them into trouble.

The pulling away the shoulders is like a horse that does not want to be harnessed.

They did not want God to have control of them.

Zechariah 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."

"In His Spirit":

The Holy Spirit served a vital function in the revelation and inspiration of God's Word through human authors (1 Cor. 2:10; 2 Peter 1:21).

"Adamant":

This means diamond.

This is saying their hearts were so hard it was like a diamond.

Their hearts could not be touched by God.

If they would soften their hearts, and listen to the law of God, they could have been saved from the wrath of God.

They did not listen, and the wrath of the LORD of hosts came upon them.

He sent judges and prophets to them with warnings from Him, but they did not listen.

Zechariah 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:"

“They would not hear”:

This reflects a severe form of God’s wrath by which He abandons disobedient sinners (see note on 11:9; Judges 10:13-14; 16:18-21; Prov. 1:24-31; Hosea 4:17; Matt. 15:14; Romans 1:18-32).

If they would not hearken to the voice of God, He would not hearken unto them.

You reap what you sow.

God listens to those of His own who listen to Him.

James 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."

Zechariah 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."

“I scattered them”:

This refers to the captivity and dispersion of the people and the desolation of the land in their absence (Deut. 30:3-10).

The chastisement of God came upon them to teach them to reach out to God.

They were scattered to foreign countries, until they realized their need for God.

Jer. 9:16 "I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them."

The wrath of God scattered them.

Zechariah Chapter 7 Questions

1. The ninth month would be about _____ on our calendar.
2. This message comes to Zechariah about ____ years after the visions.
3. Sherezer came to Jerusalem for what reason?
4. Is his name Hebrew?
5. They thought of Jerusalem as being the center of _____.
6. What question did they want answered?
7. Why had they asked the priests and prophets?
8. What months had they fasted, while they were in captivity?
9. Why did they fast in the seventh month?
10. What was wrong with their fasting?
11. Besides their fasts, what other complaint did God have?
12. What kind of food had they eaten?
13. God would not accept sacrifice that was done out of _____.
14. What did God tell them to do in verse 9?
15. What do most of the Ten Commandments deal with?
16. Oppress not the _____.
17. What separated God's people from the rest of the world?
18. What is a Christian?
19. Verse 11 tells us they reacted how?
20. What were their hearts like?

21. What does "adamant" mean?
22. Who had God sent to warn them?
23. Did they listen to them?
24. Why would God not listen to them?
25. Where had God scattered them to?
26. What did you learn from this lesson?