

Bob Deering // October 23, 2018

The Journey Through Zechariah Session 8 Chapter 7 and 8

Opening Statement: Nearly two years have gone by since the amazing night that Zechariah the prophet received eight visions in one night, in which unfolded the thoughts and purposes of God concerning Israel and the nations from the beginning to the very end of this age. Now, the word of God comes again to Zechariah.

The whole book of Zechariah is about Jerusalem, including Zechariah 7-8, which beckons us to seek for the fullness of God's destiny for her, instead of living spiritually disconnected from it. Part of this teaching is to understand God's great zeal for Jerusalem and to engage our hearts and prayers for the peace of Jerusalem!

As we begin to move through these two chapters, it amazes me that God is always trying to get us to see the great benefit of being in a **relationship with Him**. God can't give us a life of happiness and peace apart from Himself. Maybe because there is no true happiness and peace apart from Him, it is just not there, there is no such thing.

Let's recap:

- A primary theme in Zechariah 7-8 is *how to respond* to the message of grace in Zechariah 1-6. The zeal and mercy of God seen in Zechariah 1-2 reach great heights in Zechariah 3-4 when He freely and fully cleanses Israel's leadership and promises to anoint and give them supernatural resources to lead a national and international revival to remove their enemies (Zech: 5-6).
- The two chapters of Zechariah 7-8 go together in a special way much like the other two-chapter units (Zech. 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6). Zechariah 7-8 informs Israel how to respond to the grace of God that freely and fully cleanses and anoints them as described in Zechariah 3-4, so that they walk in the fullness of God's promises as set forth in Zechariah 1-2, and in the final removal of all their enemies as seen in Zechariah 5-6. This results in all nations worshiping Jesus (8:20-23).

Very important time line:

Eighteen years earlier, Israel returned from Babylonian captivity to walk in her national promises, specifically related to rebuilding the temple, or house of prayer, which the Lord had designated as a place of worship and encounter with Him. Within two years they became discouraged and quit building the house of prayer for 16 years. After this long delay, the Lord raised up two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to inspire them to commit themselves to God and His purposes with zeal.

Israel repented and recommitted to work on the temple on September 22, 520 BC (Hag. 1:14-15). By November that year they were already drawing back, so Zechariah called them to repent (1:3). They responded quickly (1:6). Then three months later (Feb. 15, 519 BC), Zechariah received eight visions in one night (1:7-6:8). **About two years later** (Dec. 518 BC), he gave his third message (Zech. 7-8). This was 16 months before the temple was completed.

I. Introduction:

- A. With the temple nearly finished, and in a new season of blessing, they felt that it was time to stop mourning over what they lacked and just to rejoice in what they had gained. This was one of the primary questions being asked throughout all Israel (7:3). It is the same question that is being asked by many in the Church today.

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- B.** God's answer came in four messages each indicated by, *"The word of the Lord of Hosts came"* (7:4, 8; 8:1, 18). His complete answer is found in combining all four exhortations (Zech. 7-8).
1. The first two messages are *negative* (Zech. 7), calling them to repent, with warnings.
 2. The last two messages are *positive* (Zech. 8), giving them glorious promises that will cause the fasts to be turned to feasts when Israel is restored and Jesus lives in Jerusalem.
- C.** The Lord never answered their question directly, but left them to decide, after giving them His perspective that they only fasted to make their life more comfortable, rather than to encounter Him in deep relationship (7:5). He warned them that their fathers had approached Him that way too (7:7-14), with their focus on receiving circumstantial blessing without growing deep in their relationship with God. In the end they had drawn back in their relationship with God, becoming offended when the blessing didn't come in the way they thought it should. The Lord was asking them if it troubled them that they were asking the wrong question just like their fathers had.
- D.** The message was a call to wholeheartedness (7:4-10) in response to God's zeal for them (8:1-2), and commitment to bless them (8:3-23), yet with warnings of judgment for rebellion (7:11-14). This message parallels Zechariah's first message when he called Israel to repentance (1:3), followed by an emphasis on God's zeal and blessing, yet with warnings of judgment (1:4-21).

II. Zechariah 7:1-7

- A.** *In the fourth year of King Darius [518 BC] it came to pass that the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, on the fourth day of the ninth month, Chislev, when the people [from Bethel] sent Sherezer, with Regem-Melech and his men, to the house of God, to pray before the LORD, and to ask the priests who were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and the prophets, saying, "Should I weep in the fifth month and fast as I have done for so many years?" Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: "When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me—for Me? When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink for yourselves? Should you not have obeyed the words which the LORD proclaimed through the former prophets when Jerusalem and the cities around it were inhabited and prosperous?"*
- B.** Men from Bethel come to Jerusalem to ask a question about the necessity of fasting (7:1-3). Four fasts had been instituted related to events (586 BC) that occurred about 70 years earlier. Again, Zech. 7:1-3.

III. Zechariah 7:4-7 - The Lord rebuked the people and did not give them a direct answer to their question. He just lays it out very clearly because He knows all things.

- A.** The Lord's response makes it clear that their question was not based on a genuine desire to understand God's heart and to please Him, but merely to avoid fasting. The Lord asked them who they were fasting for. Were they fasting to see more of God's glory in their life

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and nation or only because they wanted their circumstances to improve?

- B. An important question being asked today concerns how we are to respond to His grace. Some are asking *how little* do they have to give to God because they have received grace. Others are asking *how much* they can give back to God because they have received grace. This question represents two very different approaches to our relationship with Jesus. In other words, how far do I *have to go* in my relationship with Jesus because of free grace? Or, how far *will He empower me to go* in my relationship with Jesus because of free grace?
- C. Does Jesus' work on the cross *cancel* my need to love and pursue Him with all of my heart, or does it *empower* me to love and pursue Him with all of my heart?
- D. A foundational premise of the Christian life is to seek to love God with all our strength. To love God this way means to seek and serve Him with all our strength. We continually seek to give Him more, until we are confident that we love and serve Him with all our strength. God's grace empowers us to give "all" our strength to Jesus; this is the most reasonable response we can give to **His worthiness**.
- E. **Rev. 5:9-12** – *And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth." Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"*
- F. *In verse 7, should you not have obeyed:* They should have obeyed the words of the prophets that were given to Jerusalem in times of prosperity. Their forefathers did not understand that the season of prosperity had been given to them to motivate them into wholeheartedness. They were perpetuating the same error for which the prophets corrected their forefathers.

IV. Zechariah 7:9-14

Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless...let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother. "They refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear...They would not hear, so they called out and I would not listen," says the LORD of hosts. "But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations...Thus the land became desolate after them...for they made the pleasant land desolate."

- A. Zechariah summarized the message of the prophets, calling for justice, mercy, and compassion, and for Israel to never oppress the weak nor make plans to do evil. We express our love to God by loving people. The Lord calls for fasting that is rooted in obedience and results in loving people. He describes the life that agrees with seeking God in fasting and prayer for breakthrough.

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- B. Their forefathers neglected to obey and it resulted in God's judgment (7:11-14). Since they refused to listen when the Lord called, so He refused to listen when they called (Jer. 11:11).

V. Zechariah 8

- A. Zechariah continues the message that was started in Zechariah 7. In Zechariah 8, the Lord set before Israel their future destiny and restoration in the millennial kingdom. The restoration in Zechariah's day was a foreshadowing of a future greater blessing to come to Israel.
- B. The message of Zechariah 7 was to repent, seek God, and live godly *to avoid judgment*.
- C. The message of Zechariah 8 was to repent, seek God, and live godly *to receive future blessing*.
- D. In Zechariah 8 we see two main messages with ten distinct themes, each introduced by "**Thus says the Lord**" (8:2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 14, 19, 20, 23).
- E. God's promises for Israel and all His people are rooted in revelation of His zeal (8:2). This is one of the most powerful self-revelations of God in Scripture. The revelation of His zeal relates here to restoring the grace of fasting with prayer for the full blessing on Israel. When we see God's emotions, it motivates us to pray with fasting for the fullness of His purpose.
- F. *I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; with great fervor I am zealous for her. (Zech. 8:2)* Zechariah had been commissioned with a specific message to proclaim about God's zeal (1:14). Now, two years later, he repeats it for emphasis in Zechariah 8:2.
- G. *Thus says the LORD of hosts: "I am zealous for Jerusalem..." (Zech. 1:14)* The message of God's zeal is given to awaken our zeal for God. Jesus told the church of Laodicea that they must repent and be zealous because He loved them. He pointed back to Zechariah 8:2, linking His love, zeal, and repentance just as Zechariah preached it.
- H. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. (Rev. 3:19)* Folks, this is the message for our day; this is the Heart of God for His people, for His Church. Return to me; change your thinking; come into My Love; come into My peace; come into My rest. This is the safest place to be is living in My grace, My love, My word.

I. Zechariah 8:3

- 1.** The Lord will live in Jerusalem (8:3) just as Zechariah prophesied earlier (1:16; 2:10). Jesus referred to Jerusalem as the city of the great King (Mt. 5:35). The nations will call Jerusalem the City of Truth, and the temple mount will be called the Holy Mountain. Jesus' throne will be there, making Jerusalem the epicenter of God's activity throughout the millennial earth (Isa. 2:2-4).

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2. *"I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the LORD of hosts, the Holy Mountain." (Zech. 8:3)*

J. Zechariah 8:4-6

1. Jerusalem will be a city that is perfectly safe without any fear, crime, or war (8:4-5). Elderly people will sit in the streets, and children will play in them without fear. Isaiah described people living to a great age, even for hundreds of years, being as "old as a tree" (Isa. 65:20, 25).
2. *"Old men and old women shall sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets." (Zech. 8:4-5) "If it is marvelous [too good to be true] in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, will it also be marvelous in My eyes?" says the LORD of hosts. (Zech. 8:6)*

K. Zechariah 8:7-10

1. The Lord promised to bring His people back to Jerusalem (8:7-8). This will be a total reversal of the scattering that Israel has suffered. Israel's national conversion will result in the people enjoying covenant relationship with Him as His people. *"Behold, I will save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; I will bring them back, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people and I will be their God, in truth and righteousness." (Zech. 8:7-8)*
2. *Let your hands be strong, you who have been hearing in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, who spoke in the day the foundation was laid for the house of the LORD of hosts, that the temple might be built. For before these days there were no wages for man nor any hire for beast; there was no peace from the enemy for whoever went out or came in; for I set all men, everyone, against his neighbor. (Zech. 8:9-10)*
 - a. *Be strong:* The prophets Haggai and Zechariah called them to be strong so as to finish building the temple (Hag. 2:4). Zechariah told them three times to be strong (8:9, 13, 15).
 - b. *No wages:* During the 16-year delay, the Lord sent an economic crisis with a drought (Hag. 1:6-11; 2:15-19). He told them to compare their economic condition before they began working on the temple to their present condition. They were in a new season in which the Lord promised "from this day will I bless you" (Hag. 2:18-19).
3. *"You have sown much, and bring in little...and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes...You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away...because of My house that is in ruins,*

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while every one of you runs to his own house...I called for a drought on the land." (Hag. 1:6-11)

L. Zechariah 8:11-12

1. God promised to bless the economy and agriculture and stop the drought (8:11-12; Hag. 2:19). Zechariah both rebuked (7:5) and encouraged (8:9-12, 14) the people in his own generation.
2. *"But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days...For the seed shall be prosperous, the vine shall give its fruit, the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew—I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these." (Zech. 8:11-12)*

M. Zechariah 8:13-15

1. God will save Israel and Judah and cause them to be a blessing to the nations (8:13, 7; Gen. 12:3). There will be a worldwide reversal of the curse in the Millennium.
2. *"It shall come to pass that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you, and you shall be a blessing." (Zech. 8:13)* God's zeal is seen in His determination to both do good to and discipline Israel (8:14-15). It is important to see both expressions of His zeal in order to understand His end-time plans for Israel.
3. *"Just as I determined to punish you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath," says the LORD of hosts, "and I would not relent, so again in these days I am determined to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear." (Zech. 8:14-15)*

N. Zechariah 8:16-22

1. Zechariah emphasized both sides to Israel receiving God's blessing in his generation (8:14-17)— God's role in determining to do good "in these days" (8:14-15) and Israel's in obeying (8:16-17). In light of God's great promises, the people should speak with truth, do justice, and bring peace in their community life. This is a repetition of the exhortation to godliness given in 7:9-10.
2. *"These are the things you shall do: speak each man the truth to his neighbor; give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace; Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; do not love a false oath. All these are things I hate." (Zech. 8:16-17)*
3. He described the lifestyle that agrees with seeking God with fasting and prayer for breakthrough. We are to use our resources as an expression of our loyalty and love for God and His purpose. We express our love to God by loving people. The

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Lord calls for fasting that is rooted in obedience that results in our loving people.

4. The Lord only gave a partial answer to the question about fasting (7:5). He now returns to this question, thus showing that this was the subject that He was addressing throughout Zechariah 7- 8. The fast days of the past will be feasts in the future, as Israel experiences the fullness of salvation.

O. Zechariah 8:19

1. *The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be...cheerful feasts for the house of Judah. Therefore love truth and peace.*
2. Truth and peace will so fully triumph; Our fasting should focus on these and not just on enriching our personal circumstances (7:5).
3. God's zeal is for the supremacy and glory of His Son, who will be worshiped by all the nations from Jerusalem (2:11; 8:20-23; 14:16-18). This will be a result of Jesus living Jerusalem (8:3).

P. Zechariah 8:20-22

"Peoples shall yet come, inhabitants of many cities; the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, 'Let us continue to go and pray before the LORD, and seek the LORD of hosts. I myself will go also.' Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD."

1. *"I will gather all nations [Gentiles] and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory... I will send to the nations...who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. Then they [Gentiles] shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the LORD out of all nations...to My holy mountain Jerusalem (Isa. 66:18-20)*
2. *All nations shall flow to it [Jerusalem]. Many people shall...say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He [Jesus] will teach us...for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2:2-3)*
3. Many Gentiles will grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, not to persecute them, but to ask to accompany them because Gods blessing so obviously rests on him. Jesus' glory will be so apparent in Jerusalem that all the nations will go to Him.

Q. Zechariah 8:23

"In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"