

Zechariah 7:1-8:23
August 3, 2022

II. The Night Visions (1:7-6:15)

III. Past Hypocritical Worship; Future Pure Worship (7:1-8:23)

As we enter Zechariah 7-8, we fast forward two years, from *the eighth month of the second year of Darius* (1:1) to *the ninth month... in the fourth year* (7:1). We have a clear indication that we are beginning a new section, now dealing with true godliness as opposed to hypocritical fasting.

The question arises in 7:1-3 – *Should I weep... and fast as I have done for so many years?* Beginning His response, the LORD of hosts questions the true purpose of their fasting – *Did you really fast for Me* (v. 5)? God's reminding them to *not be like their fathers, to whom the former prophets preached* (1:4), and will now go on to focus on what the Israelites should be emphasizing before fasting:

- *execute true justice* (v. 9)
- *show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother* (v. 9)
- *do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor* (v. 10)
- *let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother* (v. 10)

The LORD is more concerned about them loving their neighbor than He is mere external acts that soothed their self-righteousness (cf. Isa 58). Outward acts of godliness are all well and good when combined with true piety, but if we neglect *loving our neighbor as ourselves* (Matt 22:39), all the external things matter little.

As a result of their fathers *refusing to heed* (v. 11), the LORD *scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations which they had not known* (v. 14). In other words, disobedience to the Law brought about the removal of God's blessing, and their exile from the land to Assyria, Babylon, and now, Medo-Persia.

But now, the Israelites have already begun returning to the land. The charge from the beginning of the book is to do better than their fathers did. With his prophetic glasses, Zechariah's now going to look past the current generation that had regathered in Jerusalem to a future time in

which the LORD will perform an incredible work of restoration because *I am zealous for Zion with great zeal* (8:1). What does that look like?

- the LORD *will return to Zion and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem* (8:3)
- Jerusalem *shall be called the City of Truth and the Holy Mountain* (v. 3; Isa 65:25)
- *old men and old women shall again sit in its streets* (v. 4; cf. Isa 65:20); perhaps watching all the children (v. 5)!
- the LORD will *save My people from the land of exile and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem* (vv. 7-8)
- *they shall be His people and He will be their God* (v. 8; cf. Hos 2:23)
- *the seed, the vine, the ground, and the heavens will produce abundantly* (v. 12)
- no longer will they be *a curse*; rather, *a blessing* (v. 13; cf. Gen 12:2-3)

In those days, God will be *determined to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah* (v. 15; cf. Jer 31:31). At that point, all of those interpersonal relationships highlighted in chapter seven will now come to pass (cf. 8:16-17 with 7:9-10). In all of this, fasting will return, but with *joy and gladness and cheerful feasts* (v. 19).

We place all of these depictions of future blessings in the Messianic Kingdom, that point in time after the Tribulation during which Jesus physically returns to the earth to rule and reign for one thousand years. While some of these characteristics may also be true of the New Heaven and the New Earth – the eternal state – they have their start during this Messianic Kingdom.

It's during this time that *men from... the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man*, telling him that they will go with him to worship the Lord (v. 23). Indeed, *may peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem* (v. 22).

In describing what the future will be like when the Messiah comes (which will also be the focus off the remainder of the book), Zechariah encourages the Israelites of his day to be faithful followers of Yahweh in the meantime.