

The Visions to Zechariah Zechariah 7:8 – 8:23

Lesson 4

Hearts Like Flint

Zechariah 7:⁸ Then the word of the Lord came to Zechariah saying, ⁹ "Thus has the Lord of hosts said, 'Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother; ¹⁰ and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.' ¹¹ "But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears from hearing. ¹² "They made their hearts *like* flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore, great wrath came from the Lord of hosts. ¹³ "And just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen," says the Lord of hosts; ¹⁴ "but I scattered them with a storm wind among all the nations whom they have not known. Thus the land is desolated behind them so that no one went back and forth, for they made the pleasant land desolate."

The second vision of December 7th, 518 BC dealt with the hearts of the people in Jerusalem and followed the same outline used in the Isaiah 58:3-7 passage presented previously. The Lord wanted His people to be different after the exile but they were returning to the ways of the pre-exilic thinking that had caused the Lord to exile them. Rather than wasting their time with fasting, they should have spent their time dispensing true justice coupled with mercy and compassion for the poor, the travelers, the widows and the orphans who could not protect or provide for themselves. The Lord spoke about both concepts through Isaiah and Amos.

Isaiah 1:¹⁷ Learn to do good; Seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

Amos 5:²⁴ But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

The generations before the exile had literally turned away from God and His precepts. They had plugged their ears so they could not hear the word of the Lord even though He was speaking to them through the mouths of the prophets.¹⁵ They had made their hearts as hard as flint and refused to obey the words of the Lord. Now, the exiles were becoming just as disobedient as their ancestors just one generation back. The words of the prophets were important in the theology of God. When the Lord said, "They made their hearts *like* flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore, great wrath came from the Lord of hosts," He gave the words of the prophets the same authority as the words of the Mosaic Law, and He identified the Holy Spirit as the source of those words.¹⁶ The people had refused to hear the Divine words of the prophets and the Lord's anger came upon them. The Lord had had enough of their sin and scattered them to the winds. He refused to allow them to return to His land in Jerusalem until He was ready. Although they cried for forgiveness, prayed for mercy, and begged for intervention, the Lord would not listen to them because they had not listened to Him. During their entire exile, the Israelites could not return to their homes

¹⁵ Isaiah 6:10

¹⁶ 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21

because the land between Assyria and Judea was desolate; however, that desolate land protected the Promised Land. No one was able to overtake that land because the Lord had reserved it for the return of His people. God was angry, but He was still faithful to His promise to preserve Israel.

Exceedingly Jealous for Zion

Zechariah 8:¹ Then the word of the Lord of hosts came, saying, ² "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her.' ³ "Thus says the Lord, 'I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts *will be called* the Holy Mountain.' ⁴ "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age. ⁵ 'And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.' ⁶ "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'If it is too difficult in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, will it also be too difficult in My sight?' declares the Lord of hosts. ⁷ "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; ⁸ and I will bring them *back* and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.'

The third vision of the night showed Zechariah the Lord's plan for Zion. Where is Zion? The old city of Jerusalem sat on two hills, Mt. Zion and Mt. Moriah. Long before Jerusalem was populated, the Lord directed Abraham to Mt. Moriah where he was to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. When the Lord saw Abraham's faithfulness, He provided a ram for the sacrifice instead. Later on that mountain, Abraham brought offerings to Melchizedek, the king of Salem, who had no beginning and no end, no father and no mother.¹⁷ During the time of the Egyptian bondage of Israel, Melchizedek's Salem became Jerusalem, the proposed city of peace. Whoever controlled Mt. Moriah controlled the spiritual power of the land.

Just south of Mt. Moriah is Mt. Zion. During the Israelite's time of bondage in Egypt, the Canaanites overran the country, including Mt. Zion, promised to Abraham and his descendants. In later years, they built a stronghold on the mount, a great citadel. Although King Saul was unable to take the mount for his kingdom, King David took it in the seventh year of his reign. In those days, whoever controlled Mt. Zion controlled the political power of the land. When David arrived in Jerusalem, he controlled both mountains for the Lord.

In the future, the Lord will return to Mt. Zion to rule the world with His mighty arm and His rod of iron. Then, and only then, will it be the true city of peace. Then, and only then, will the two mountains physically rise to become the most holy mountain on earth. Then, and only then, will the streets be free of fear from all oppressors. He will then bring to the city of Zion all of Israel from the ends of the earth to live in peace established by His truth and righteousness. In those days, the remnant of Israel will sense the blessing and freedom found in the Lord's plan for His kingdom age.

Listen to Zechariah

Zechariah 8:⁹ "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Let your hands be strong, you who are listening in these days to these words from the mouth of the prophets, *those* who

¹⁷ Melchizedek means king. Salem means peace. Therefore, Melchizedek was the king of peace, the pre-incarnate Christ.

spoke in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid, to the end that the temple might be built. ¹⁰ ~'For before those days there was no wage for man or any wage for animal; and for him who went out or came in there was no peace because of his enemies, and I set all men one against another. ¹¹ ~'But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,' declares the Lord of hosts. ¹² 'For *there will be* peace for the seed: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce and the heavens will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these *things*. ¹³ 'It will come about that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you that you may become a blessing. Do not fear; let your hands be strong.' ¹⁴ "For thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Just as I purposed to do harm to you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,' says the Lord of hosts, 'and I have not relented, ¹⁵ so I have again purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear! ¹⁶ 'These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates. ¹⁷ 'Also let none of you devise evil in your heart against another, and do not love perjury; for all these are what I hate,' declares the Lord."

The third vision continues as the Lord directed the people to listen to the prophets who had ministered to them during the time of the rebuilding of the temple. Who were the prophets? They were Zechariah and Haggai, both used by the Lord to start the foundation of the temple and to encourage its completion. Prior to the start of the temple, the people were in dire straits as they struggled to survive. According to the visions and prophecies of Haggai, on the day they began the foundation, all their struggles ceased as the Lord provided all their needs. He had caused their distress because of their unfaithfulness to Him. When they became faithful with the work of His temple, He provided for them beyond comprehension. This vision to Zechariah is a confirmation of His promise, plan and action for Israel. In Zechariah's day, almost every nation hated Israel. Even today, Israel has only a few friends in the world. Although individual Christians throughout the world support them, few nations come to their aid. When Jesus makes Israel the premiere nation in His 1,000-years-kingdom, all will wish they were of the Jewish bloodline. All of these promises will come true. Before they left the wilderness in 1405 BC, the Lord warned Israel of His wrath and His plan to send them into exile when they forsook Him. He kept His promise. Before He sent them into exile, He told them when He would return them to the Promised Land. He kept His promise. In this vision, He tells them about their future in His kingdom. Why would He not keep His promise? From Zechariah's vision until the 1,000-years-kingdom age, they were instructed to live life rightly, in truth, in peace, with a pure heart and without lies on their lips. The Lord hates both lies and evil hearts. In this vision, the Lord is instructing the people of Zechariah's day to live as if they were already in His kingdom, living rightly in truth and peace. With that as His instruction, the fourth vision's purpose was for the Israelites to begin living as if they were already in the 1,000-years-kingdom.

Change the Fasts

Zechariah 8:¹⁸ Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, ¹⁹ "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth *months* will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah; so love truth and peace.' ²⁰ "Thus says the Lord of hosts, '*It will* yet *be* that peoples will come, even the inhabitants of many cities. ²¹ ~'The inhabitants of one will go to another, saying, "Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I will also go." ²² ~'So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the

favor of the Lord.' ²³ "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'""

The fourth and final vision of December 7th, 518 BC returned to the original question from the Bethelites about their fasting. In the first part of the answer, the Lord modified their question to include the fasts of the fifth and seventh months. In this vision, the Lord modified the list again by adding the fasts of the fourth and tenth months. What were these fasts all about?

The fast of the fourth month mourned the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar on the 9th day of Tamuz in Zedekiah's 11th year as king.¹⁸ The fast of the tenth month mourned the siege and dominance of Jerusalem and King Zedekiah on the 10th day of Tebeth in the Zedekiah's 9th year.¹⁹ Notice that they were both days of mourning. The entire list of Jewish fast days shows Israel's commemoration by the mourning of some tragedy in Jewish history with the exception of the Day of Atonement.

List of Jewish Fast Days²⁰

1. First of Nisan: The sons of Aaron were destroyed in the Tabernacle.
2. Tenth of Nisan: Miriam died; the well that followed the Israelites in the wilderness disappeared.
3. Twenty-sixth of Nisan: Joshua, the son of Nun, died.
4. Tenth of Iyyar: Eli, the high priest and his two sons died, and the Ark was captured by the Philistines.
5. Twenty-ninth (twenty-eighth) of Iyyar: Samuel, the prophet, died.
6. Twenty-third of Siwan: The Israelites ceased bringing the firstlings to Jerusalem in the days of Jeroboam.
7. Twenty-fifth of Siwan: Simeon, son of Gamaliel, Ishmael, son of Elisha, and Hanina, the superior of the priests were executed.
8. Twenty-seventh of Siwan: Hanina, son of Teradion, was burned while holding a scroll of the Torah.
9. Seventeenth of Tamuz: The tablets were broken; the regular daily sacrifice ceased; Apostemus burned the Law and introduced an idol into the holy place; the Romans broke into the city.
10. First of Ab: Aaron, the high priest, died.
11. Ninth of Ab: It was decreed that Jews who went out of Egypt should not enter Palestine; the Temple was destroyed for the first and second time; Bether was conquered, and Jerusalem was plowed over with a plowshare.
12. Eighteenth of Ab: The western light was extinguished in the time of Ahaz.
13. Seventh (seventeenth) of Elul: The spies died in a pestilence.
14. Third of Tishri: Gedaliah and his associates were assassinated in Mizpah.
15. Tenth of Tishri: Day of Atonement
16. Fifth of Tishri: Twenty Israelites died and Akiba was imprisoned and afterward executed.
17. Seventh of Tishri: It was decreed that the Israelites should die by sword and by famine because of the golden calf.
18. Sixth (seventh) of Marheshwan: Nebuchadnezzar blinded King Zedekiah after he had slaughtered the latter's children in his presence.

¹⁸ 2 Kings 25:3, Jeremiah 39:2; 52:6-7

¹⁹ 2 Kings 25:1, Jeremiah 52:4, Ezekiel 24:1-2

²⁰ <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=59&letter=F#152>

19. Seventh (twenty-eighth) of Kislev: [Jehoiakim burned the scroll](#) that Baruch wrote at the dictation of Jeremiah.
20. Eighth of Tebet: The [Torah was translated into Greek](#) in the time of Ptolemy; there was [darkness in the world for three days](#).
21. Ninth of Tebet: Ezra died.
22. Tenth of Tebet: The [siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar began](#).
23. Eighth (fifth) of Shebat: [The righteous \(elders\)](#) in the time of Joshua [died](#).
24. Twenty-third of Shebat: [The Israelites gathered to war with the tribe of Benjamin](#).
25. Seventh of Adar: [Moses died](#).
26. Ninth of Adar: The [controversy](#) between the house of Shammai and Hillel occurred.

Fast days in Jewish life never were, nor are they today, concerned with seeking God's approval or divine guidance. They were all established to mourn some event, tragedy, death or gross sin in Jewish history. During the exile, when Daniel mourned the sinfulness of his people, he cried out to the Lord all evening so overtaken by grief that he could not eat a bite of food. He mourned for his people. Daniel's fasting was brought on by grief as was that of David,²¹ Nineveh,²² the sons of Israel,²³ Mizpah,²⁴ the death of Saul,²⁵ Ezra's fear,²⁶ Nehemiah²⁷ and Esther.²⁸ In each case, the people who were fasting in the Old Testament were surrounded by grief, mourning and sin. The fast of 1 Kings 21:9-27 was conjured up by Jezebel to steal the vineyard of Naboth for Ahab. The fasts mentioned in Isaiah 58 condemned the people who were engaged in the practice. The fast of Joel speaks of Israel's tribulation when the Lord will starve the people so they will have nowhere to turn but Him. Only in the case of Joel will the Lord use it to draw the Jews to Him. The fasting will occur because He will send the locusts to destroy their crops so they will starve and turn to Him during the seven years of Israel's tribulation. At that time, all nations will still detest Israel and not one of them will sell food to her. Israel will not be eating because of her circumstances under the Divine direction of the Lord. Not one of the other fasts is ordained by God. He wants them to turn each one into joyous feasts and celebrations rather than days of self-induced starvation that harms the body, the temple of the Holy Spirit. He told them to change the fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months into celebrations and live in truth and peace as if they are already in the Lord's kingdom. This message is the instruction of this fourth vision of Zechariah.

What a blessing the kingdom will be for Israel! When it comes, Israel will be the premier nation of the world. Gentiles, ten to one, yearning for the same favor from the Lord, will seek out Jews. All the nations will worship the Lord as He sits upon His throne in Jerusalem.

Sadly, the Jews did not follow the words of the Lord through Zechariah. They did not accept Him when He came as a babe and died as their final sacrifice. They still fast in self-abasement but it is for them – not the Lord.

²¹ 2 Samuel 12:16-23

²² Jonah 5:5

²³ Judges 20:20

²⁴ 1 Samuel 7:6

²⁵ 1 Samuel 31:13, 2 Samuel 1:12, 1 Chronicle 10:12

²⁶ Ezra 8:21-23

²⁷ Nehemiah 1:4; 9:1

²⁸ Esther 4:3-16;9:31