

# Zechariah 7:1-14

|   |   |                      |
|---|---|----------------------|
| Darius confirmed Cyrus' decree that the Jews continue rebuilding the temple             | <b>520 BC</b>   | Ezra 6:1-14          |
| Haggai preached his first three sermons   | 6 <sup>th</sup> & 7 <sup>th</sup> months<br><b>520 BC</b> | Haggai 1:1, 15; 2:1  |
| Zechariah preached his first sermon   | 8 <sup>th</sup> month<br><b>520 BC</b>                    | Zechariah 1:1        |
| Haggai preached his fourth and fifth sermons  | 9 <sup>th</sup> month<br><b>520 BC</b>                    | Haggai 2:10, 20      |
| Zechariah received his eight night visions  | 11 <sup>th</sup> month<br><b>520 BC</b>                   | Zechariah 1:7        |
| Joshua, the high priest, was ceremonially and symbolic crowned                          | 11 <sup>th</sup> month<br><b>520 BC</b>                   | Zechariah 6:9-15     |
| <b>Delegation from Bethel arrived<br/>Zechariah again receives the word of the Lord</b> | 9 <sup>th</sup> month<br><b>518 BC</b>                    | <b>Zechariah 7:1</b> |
| Jews completed the temple and dedicated it  | 12 <sup>th</sup> month<br><b>515 BC</b>                   | Ezra 6:15            |
| Xerxes 1 (Ahasuerus) reigned over Persia  | <b>486-464 BC</b>   | Esther 2:16          |
| Artaxerxes I reigned over Persia  | <b>464-424 BC</b>   |                      |
| 5,000 Jews returned to Israel under Ezra's leadership                                   | <b>458 BC</b>   | Ezra 7:7             |
| Artaxerxes I authorized Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls                           | <b>445 BC</b>   | Nehemiah 2:1         |
| Nehemiah led the third return to Israel   | <b>444 BC</b>   | Nehemiah 2:9         |

## Outline:

- A. 1:7-6:8 – Eight night visions
- B. 6:9-15 – Ceremonial and Symbolic crowning of Joshua
- C. 7-8 – Word of the Lord given four times responding to delegation from Bethel
  - a. 7:4-7 – Rebuke by the Lord – the people are not ready for the kingdom of God
  - b. 7:8-14 – Command to Repent – become the people of God and the kingdom will come
  - c. 8:1-17 – Promised Restoration
  - d. 8:18-23 – Kingdom Age
- D. 9-14 – Oracles about the Messiah and the future Israel, or Two “burdens” of Zechariah:
  - a. 9-11 – Zechariah's first burden – the coming and rejection of Messiah
  - b. 12-14 – Zechariah's second burden – the coming and acceptance of Messiah

Chapter 6 ends with 6:15 –

**“And this shall come to pass, if you will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.”**

- These things will come to pass “if” Zechariah's generation diligently obeys the voice of the Lord
- But, these things did not come to pass in Zechariah's generation because the people did not obey because they could not obey
- So, these prophecies will be fulfilled later when Israel “diligently obeys” the voice of the Lord
- Israel will diligently obey when Zechariah 12:10 occurs,  
**“I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced,**

**they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.”**

1. One question in Zechariah 1:2 results in the Lord giving four responses.
  - a. But, none of the four responses answers the question
  - b. Instead the four responses go directly to the heart of the issue
2. The focus of Zechariah and the Lord’s ministry through Zechariah is the spiritual renewal of his generation (520 BC)

**Zechariah 7:1 – “In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev.**

1. This word from the Lord came to Zechariah on December 7, 518 BC
  - a. This is two years after the eight night visions
  - b. This is three years before the temple is completed

**7:2 – “Now the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech and their men to entreat the favor of the Lord,**

|                      |           |             |       |             |        |                                  |
|----------------------|-----------|-------------|-------|-------------|--------|----------------------------------|
| 7278 [e]             |           | 8272 [e]    |       | 1008 [e]    |        | 7971 [e]                         |
| me·lek               | wə·re·ġem | 'e·ṣer      | śar-  | 'êl,        | bêt-   | way·yiš·lah                      |
| מֶלֶךְ               | וּרְגָם   | אַצֵּר      | שָׂר- | אֵל         | בֵּית- | וַיִּשְׁלַח 2                    |
| with Regem-melech    | and       | Sarezer     | -     | Bethel      | [to]   | and when [the people] sent       |
| Conj-w   N-proper-ms |           | N-proper-ms |       | N-proper-fs | Prep   | Conj-w   V-Qal-ConseclImperf-3ms |

|             |          |         |                     |                      |
|-------------|----------|---------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 3069 [e]    | 6440 [e] | 853 [e] | 2470 [e]            | 582 [e]              |
| Yah·weh.    | pə·nê    | 'et-    | le·ḥal·lō·wî        | wa·'ā·nā·šāw;        |
| יְהוָה:     | פָּנָי   | אֶת-    | לְחַלּוֹת           | וְאֲנָשָׁיו          |
| Yahweh      | before   | -       | to pray             | and his men          |
| N-proper-ms | N-cpc    | DirObjM | Prep-I   V-Piel-Inf | Conj-w   N-mpc   3ms |

1. Bethel was 10 miles north of Jerusalem
2. The leaders of the Jews in Bethel sent two representatives to ask the priest in Jerusalem a question
3. The two Jewish delegates had Babylon names which would indicate they themselves had been born in Babylon and were among a group of exiles that had returned
4. (Another possible translation and view of this verse is a Jew still living in Babylon named Bethel-Sharezar, which literally means “House of God – Protect the King”, had the title of Regemmelech, which literally means “King’s Friend”. He would have come from Babylon with royal authority from Darius to present this question

**7:3 – “saying to the priests of the house of the Lord of hosts and the prophets, “Should I weep and abstain in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?”**

1. A delegation came from Bethel to ask if they should continue practicing the fast of the fifth month.
2. The only fast in the Law of Moses was on the Day of Atonement found in Lev. 16:29; 23:27-32

3. The fast mentioned in this verse that the delegates from Bethel were asking about was not this biblical fast on the Day of Atonement, but a fast in the fifth month the memorialized the destruction of the temple in 586 BC.
4. There were four fasts that the Jews had instituted themselves and had followed “for so many years” that all commemorated events connected to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem:

|                                      |             |  |                 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|--|-----------------|
| Fourth Month<br>17 <sup>th</sup> Day |             | Mourn the Capture of Jerusalem   | Jer. 52:6-30    |
| Fifth Month<br>9 <sup>th</sup> Day   | July/August | Burning of Jerusalem and destruction of Solomon’s Temple   | 2 Kings 25:2-10 |
| Seventh Month<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> Day |             | Commemorating the murder of Gedaliah, governor of Judah and Massacre of 80 men; One of the last acts of rebellion of Jeremiah’s Generation | Jeremiah 41:2   |
| 10 Month<br>10 <sup>th</sup> Day     |             | Beginning of Nebuchadnezzar’s siege against Jerusalem  | 2 Kings 25:1    |

5. The delegation asks “done for so many years”, but the Lord identifies it as “for these seventy years”
  - a. 586-515 BC is potentially the 70 year period referred to by Jeremiah (Jer. 25:11-12).
    - i. Temple was destroyed in 586 BC
    - ii. Temple was dedicated in 515 BC
    - iii. The Jews had fasted for the destruction of the temple for almost 70 years in 518 BC (the time of Zechariah 7)
  - b. The delegation was asking:
    - i. Has the kingdom come?
    - ii. Is this now the fulfillment of the prophesied restoration the previous prophets spoke about?
    - iii. Should we stop fasting and begin to celebrate?

7:4 – **“Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me:**

7:5 – **““Say to all the people of the land and the priests, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted?’**

1. Zechariah does not respond to this question until 8:18-2
2. Zechariah does not condemn or support fasting.
3. Zechariah is looking past the surface of the question because their question indicates they were not yet understanding the problem.
  - a. The kingdom had not yet come with the return from exile and the rebuilding of the temple
  - b. The people were not yet spiritually ready.
    - i. They needed to be different than their forefathers, but they were not. They could not fully be the people of the kingdom
    - ii. They needed to be born again. They needed the new heart. They needed the new covenant.

- iii. They did not realize these things. They did not know what they were missing. It was a difficult revelation to understand in their time, with their religion, from their worldview. Yet the prophet would speak of this.
- 4. The problem with the fast was it became a time of self-pity and mourning for what this generation had to suffer as a result of their forefather's sin.
- 5. "these seventy years" could refer to:
  - a. 605-535 BC – from the first deportation to Babylon until the first group of exiles returned
  - b. 586-516 BC – from the burning of the Temple until the completion of the rebuilt temple

**7:6 – “And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves?”**

- 1. Fasting and feasting were them trying to do something for yourself
- 2. The Lord wanted you to do something for himself which was not sacrifices and rituals, but character, the nature of God, fruit of the Spirit which would manifest in their lives as true social justice.
- 3. The fast had become a time for the people to feel sorry for themselves and blame their situation on their fathers.
  - a. They should have been fasting to avoid making the same mistakes as their fathers had made
  - b. They should have been focusing on not being like their fathers instead of fasting in self-pity

**7:7 – “Were not these the words that the Lord proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous, with her cities around her, and the South and the lowland were inhabited?”**

- 1. The forefathers had:
  - a. Not listened to the former prophets
  - b. Fasted without transforming their minds and actions
  - c. Not lived in righteousness and justice
- 2. The people of 518 BC that Zechariah spoke to were in danger of doing the same thing.
- 3. Zechariah did not provide a new Word from the Lord, but restated the words the former prophets had spoke to their forefathers.
- 4. Read Isaiah 1:10-17 – notice:
  - a. “hands are full of blood.”
  - b. “seek justice, encourage the oppressed.”
  - c. “defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.”
- 5. Read Isaiah 58:1-7 – notice
  - a. “on the day of your fasting, you do as you please
  - b. “and exploit all your workers
  - c. “Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists.”
  - d. “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
    - i. “loose the chains of injustice
    - ii. “untie the cords of the yoke
    - iii. “set the oppressed free
    - iv. “break every yoke

6. The Lord was not pleased with the fasting of 518 BC because it was not godly sorrow for sin, but was a demonstration of selfish regret for having lost their nation and their national independence (liberty, freedom).
  - a. Their fasting showed no hope of repentance and improvement
  - b. They pitied themselves, but did not fear the Lord.

The Command to Repent that their Forefathers Refused:

7:8 – **“And the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying,**

1. The second part of the Lord’s response to the delegation from Bethel

7:9 – **“Thus says the Lord of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another,**

1. This is the positive side or the “do’s”. The negative “do not’s” are in 7:10
2. The message of the previous prophets that had been rejected is summarized:
  - a. Render true judgments or, “Execute True justice”
    - i. Justice for all people
    - ii. Exodus 18:19-23 Moses was commanded to render true decisions and by doing Moses would “show them the way to live.”
    - iii. Amos 5:24 – “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.”
    - iv. Jeremiah 22:3 – “This is what the Lord says: Do what is just and right”
    - v. Jeremiah 7:5-7 – read
    - vi. In this verse “justice” is preceded by “true” which would indicate justice that is consistent with God’s justice. It is not man’s post-modern manipulating the law twisted form of “justice”
    - vii. This is the kind of justice the Lord would support
    - viii. “Render” or “Execute” or “administer” is addressed to every person, not just those with judicial authority. This refers to universal social harmony, respect and judgment on a daily basis among each other.
  - b. Show kindness to one another
    - i. “mercy” – *wehesed* – goodness, kindness
    - ii. The Hebrew *hesed* is the OT word for “grace”. It is covenant love, covenant faithfulness. It is loyalty and faithfulness combined to secure a relationship such as marriage, friendship, associates.
    - iii. It goes both ways in a relationship. Otherwise, the relationship is not possible.
    - iv. Micah 6:6 – *“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy (**hesed**) and to walk humbly with your God.”*
  - c. Show mercy to one another
    - i. “compassion” – *werahamim* –
    - ii. Hebrew word *rehem* communicate3s tenderness toward others like a mother responds to an infant.
    - iii. The etymology of this word connects it to the Hebrew word for “womb”
3. Less focus on fasting and remembering the past, and begin to do what the forefathers failed to do.
4. Instead of fasting for your forefather’s failure that resulted in the destruction and overthrow of Jerusalem, begin to do what your forefathers failed to do.

7:10 – “do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.”

1. The negative to counterbalance or mirrors the positive “do’s” above are:
  - a. Do not oppress :
    - i. Widow
    - ii. Fatherless
    - iii. Sojourner
    - iv. Poor
  - b. Do not devise evil against another
2. The opposite of “do not oppress...the poor” is to devise a social system that creates more “poor” and “fatherless” and “alien” (sojourner)
3. This is basic fourth generation sins and corrections found in Proverbs 30:14 -  
“There are those whose teeth are swords, whose fangs are knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, the needy from among mankind.”

7:11 – “But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear.

1. Three illustrations of the previous fourth generation’s rebellion and refusal to pay attention:
  - a. Turned a stubborn shoulder
    - i. Literally, “they presented a stubborn shoulder”
    - ii. Nehemiah referred to it as “they turned their backs” in Nehemiah 9:29
    - iii. Moses called it “a stiff-necked people”
  - b. Stopped their ears that they might not hear
    - i. In Isaiah 6:10 the Lord responded to the people closing their ears and hardening their hearts because the people had first closed their ears and hardened their heart:  
“*Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes*”
  - c. (7:12) Made their hearts diamond-hard. The counter to this diamond-hard heart is:
    - i. Ps. 34:19; 51:19 – broken of heart
    - ii. Dt. 10:16; 30:6 – circumcised heart
    - iii. Ezek. 36:26 – heart of flesh, a new heart and a new spirit ; removing the heart of stone

7:12 – “They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the Lord of hosts.

1. The former generation refused to listen to the prophets of the Lord
2. They hardened their hearts (minds, will)
3. Hard as a diamond – *shamir* –
4. They could not hear the:
  - a. Law
  - b. Words of the Lord
  - c. Spirit of the Lord
  - d. Prophets
5. Consider the hard ground of Mark 4 and the birds (Satan) eating the seed (message, Word)

6. Zechariah is the only OT prophet who says the Holy Spirit was the mediator of God's Word to the prophets who themselves were the mediator of God's Word to the people. Zechariah is the first to mention this role of the Holy Spirit
7. God then dulled the people's hearing because they would not listen so they would receive the judgment or wrath of God. (Romans 1)
  - a. Isaiah 6:9-11 – "And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste."
  - b. Romans 1:18, 21, 24, – "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth... For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened....Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie..."
8. Spiritual people stay focused on God's doctrinal truth, but these people would not so they could not.

7:13 – **“As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear,” says the Lord of hosts,**

1. The people did not hear the Lord when he called, so the Lord did not hear them when they called.
  - a. Proverbs 1:28 – “Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me.”
  - b. Jeremiah 11:11-12 – “Therefore, thus says the Lord, Behold, I am bringing disaster upon them that they cannot escape. Though they cry to me, I will not listen to them. Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry to the gods to whom they make offerings, but they cannot save them in the time of their trouble.

7:14 – **“and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and the pleasant land was made desolate.”**

1. What began with a simple question about fasting (Was it time to stop fasting?) became a rebuke from the Lord that basically states to the people of 518 BC the same warning with the same threat of judgment that their forefathers had received.
2. The people of 518 BC were not ready for the kingdom or ready to stop fasting. In fact the people of 518 BC were in need of correcting the very same errors their fathers had made that resulted in the 70 years of captivity.
3. It was easy to fast and mourn the things they had lost. It was a totally different thing to fast in order to face God's demands and understand his expectations.

