

Commentary on Zechariah Chapters 7 and 8, by Chuck Smith 8.21.31

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May memory verse Romans 6:8 (NKJV)

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

June memory verse Romans 6:9 (NKJV)

knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

July memory verse Romans 6:10 (NKJV)

For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God.

August memory verse Romans 6:11 (NKJV)

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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Chapter 7

Now some men came to Zechariah with a question. While they were in Babylon they had been observing a couple of days of fasting. They commemorated the day that the temple was destroyed by the Babylonian army. So they came to Zechariah with a question.

It came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came to Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu; When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD, 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? (Zec 7:1-3)

So during the seventy years of captivity, there in the fifth month there was this appointed fast commemorating the destruction of the temple.

Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying (Zec 7:4),

So Zechariah went to the Lord with it, and God answered Zechariah.

Speak unto all the people of the land, and unto the priests, saying, When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even for those seventy years, did you really fast unto me, even to me? And when you did eat, and when you did drink, did you not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? Should ye not hear the words which

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the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when the men inhabited the south and the plain? (Zec 7:4-7)

In other words, the Lord is saying, "Look, I never ordered these fasts to begin with." They were weeping and fasting over the judgment that God had brought upon their fathers because their fathers had disobeyed the word of the Lord. But they had set them up as religious holidays, and they began to develop the ceremonies, and the religious rituals surrounding these holidays. Holidays that God had never ordained; holidays that God had never established. God did not recognize them. The chart below shows the days.

Mth/Day	Reason	Reference
4/17	Mourning the capture of Jerusalem	<u>Jeremiah 52:6-30</u>
5/9	Burning of Jerusalem and the destruction of Solomon's Temple	<u>2 Kings 25:2-10</u>
7/3	Assassination of Gedaliah and the massacre of 80 men	<u>Jeremiah 4:1-10</u>
10/10	Beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's siege against Jerusalem	<u>2 Kings 25:1</u>

Now to the present day there are among the Orthodoxy of the Jews the celebration still of the two days in the fifth month and the seventh month. But God still doesn't look upon them. God said, "Look, wouldn't it have been better to have just listened to what the prophets of God had said to your fathers rather than fasting and then going ahead and eating? It had been better that you just listened to what God had said."

Now in the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah, before this took place, Isaiah spoke to the people concerning their fasting, beginning with verse 3. Oh, might as well begin with verse 1. "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet." He's ordering Isaiah to do this. "And show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, they delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and they forsook not the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching God. 'Why have you fasted,' they say, 'and You have not seen us? Oh God we've fasted and You haven't paid any attention to us. We've afflicted our souls and You didn't take knowledge of it.'" "But God You haven't really taken knowledge of it." "Behold," and God answered them. "Why didn't You, Lord, pay attention to us? We were fasting and afflicting ourselves, why didn't You pay attention?"

The Lord said unto them, "Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and you exact of all your laborers." You make everybody else work. "Behold you're fasting for strife and debate, and to smite with a fist of wickedness. You shall not fast as you do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high." You're not really fasting as unto the Lord, you're taking pleasure in these fast days; it's not a true affliction. "Is it such a fast

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that I have chosen? Did I choose this kind of a fast?" The Lord said, "A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush and spread sackcloth and ashes under him?" These were the way they were afflicting their souls, you know, lying on burlap or camel skin, which is very rough and coarse, and putting ashes on themselves. God said, "Did I ask you to do this? Do you call this a fast that is an acceptable day to the Lord? Is this not the fast that I have chosen? Isn't this the way I would rather have you fast, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke. That's," God said, "the kind of fast I want you to do. Just set at liberty those that are bound, your slaves and all, turn them free. Isn't the fast that I have chosen to deal your bread to the hungry and that you bring the poor that are cast out into thy house? If you want to really fast to the Lord, prepare a great meal, and call the poor in and feed the poor." God says, "I'd like that kind of a fast, I'll accept that kind of a fast. When you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not yourself from thine own flesh. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily, and thy righteousness shall go before thee; and the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer. Thou shalt cry, and He shall say, 'Here I am.' And if thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, and the putting forth of the finger, and the speaking of vanity" (Isaiah 58:1-9).

So people can get into religious rituals, fastings even, that God didn't order.

Now they said, "Shall we continue?" God said, "I didn't ask you to do it in the first place. You know, they weren't true fasts unto Me. It would be better if you would take a day where you'd just really sit down and hearken unto what happened, and realize that what happened, happened because of their disobedience. Here you're grieving over the loss of the temple; you should be grieving over the unrepentant heart of your fathers that caused the loss of the temple. You should be grieving over the fact that they wouldn't listen to God. So you've set up your own holidays, but I didn't order these holidays."

Shall we still observe the tenth month, and the fourth month Lord, or the twelfth month, and the fourth month? You see, these are holidays that men have established. We have our Lent season. God never ordered a Lent season. God never ordered an Ash Wednesday, a Good Friday, or a meatless Friday. These are the impositions of man. You might think about that. Because when God was questioned concerning these holidays that they had set up, God did not really recognize them, He said, "I didn't ask you to do that. Better that you just really hear the words which the Lord has cried by the prophets when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous, and the cities around about her were inhabited."

And the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy, compassions to every man his brother (Zec 7:8-9):

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That's what God really desires. You say, "I want to fast," but God says, "Hey, I would rather you just be fair, you be honest, you be merciful and you be compassionate to each other."

Don't oppress the widow, nor the fatherless, nor the stranger, or the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his neighbor in his heart (Zec 7:10).

These are the things that God will take notice of. These are the things that God will delight in. These are the things that God is asking you to do--not to fast, but to do these things.

But [the Lord said,] they refused to hearken, they pulled away the shoulder, they stopped their ears, that they should not hear (Zec 7:11).

These were the things that the prophets were telling their fathers, and they wouldn't listen to them.

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 there came great wrath from the LORD of hosts. 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 (Zec 7:12-13).

Isn't that an awesome thing? God said, "Look, I cried unto you and you wouldn't listen. I was asking you to be fair, to be honest, to be compassionate, to be merciful, to take care of the widow, and the stranger and the poor, to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry. I cried unto you, but you wouldn't answer Me. Therefore, when you cried unto Me, I didn't answer you."

"To obey is better than to sacrifice." It is important that we be obedient to the Word of the Lord. That we, each one, make the application to ourselves. That we give ear, give heed to the Word of God, so that when we are in need, and we are in trouble, when we cry unto God, that He will listen to us.

So they were scattered with a whirlwind among the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid [that is, the Babylonian army, laid] the pleasant land desolate (Zec 7:14).

Chapter 8

Now again the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, I was jealous for her with great fury. Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, I will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called A city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, The holy mountain (Zec 8:1-3).

So this is a promise of the future age when God will return, when Jesus comes and establishes His kingdom upon the earth, and will reign from Mount Zion over the earth.

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Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet be old men and old women dwelling in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof (Zec 8:4-5).

What a picturesque scene of the future kingdom, when boys and girls are playing together in the streets in complete safety. Very picturesque.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts (Zec 8:6);

Let me say that God sees the Kingdom Age in perfection, and the perfection is when boys and girls can play together safely in the streets. There are some people that are so spiritual that they think that children ought not to play together. The Kingdom Age, it shall be so. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts,"

If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of the people in these days, ["Hey you think this is great?"] should it also be marvelous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts. [It's actually, "in My day."] Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; [They'll come from the Orient, and from America.] And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness. [That is not so yet, the day will come.] Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built (Zec 8:6-9).

So he's referring to actually the prophecies of Haggai who was encouraging the people when they laid the foundation to go ahead and to build the temple and all.

For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to them that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbor. But now I will be unto the residue of this people as a former days, saith the Lord of hosts. For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, the ground shall give her increase, the heavens will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these (Zec 8:10-12).

Now you remember Haggai began his prophecy by saying, "Hey, you're planting a lot of seed, and you're taking in a little. Your money is being put into bags with holes. You don't have enough to go around. Why has it happened? Now consider the problems that you're facing. Is it not because you are dwelling in ceiled houses, and you've allowed the house of the Lord to go desolate?" Then you remember the people all decided to rebuild the temple. Haggai says, "Mark this day on your calendars, from now on it's going to be different. Your barns are gonna be full. You're gonna be blessed of the Lord, because you've now taken on again the task of building the house of the Lord." So now they are completing the task, and Zechariah is pointing out, "Now you are being blessed once again. The seed is prospering, whereas before the seed was not prospering." They were planting more than they were harvesting. "The heavens will give their dew."

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And it shall come to pass, that as you were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing (Zec 8:13):

Now this is going into the future now, the future Kingdom Age when Jesus reigns. Israel will once again be the light, and the blessing to the world.

fear not, let your hands be strong. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I did not change: So again I have thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not. These are the things that ye shall do; Speak to every man the truth to his neighbor; execute judgment in truth (Zec 8:13-16)

I want fairness. I want honesty. Speak to every man the truth to his neighbor, execute the judgment of truth, and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath: for all of these things [God said] I hate (Zec 8:16-17).

We better take a careful study of that little list of things, because those are the things that God hates, has hated, continues to hate, and will always hate. I don't want to be doing things that God hates. So study that list carefully, make sure that you are doing the things that God tells us to do. Our honesty, our truth, our peace, not imagining evil against our neighbors. God said, "I hate these things."

Now the word of the LORD [he said] came to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace (Zec 8:18-19).

So if these days you've been fasting by that order, turn them around; make them days of feasting. Make them cheerful days. No longer affliction, but cheerful days.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yes, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD (Zec 8:20-22).

Won't that be exciting when Jesus is actually dwelling in Jerusalem, and we say, "Come on let's go to Jerusalem and see the Lord!" Ooh wee that's gonna be marvelous! That's gonna be so glorious, when we'll be able to go to Jerusalem, and just sit at the feet of Jesus, and just to learn from Him. The glorious Kingdom Age. "Many people, strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord."

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all of the languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, [Hey] we will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you (Zec 8:23).