

"Empty Worship"

Part 2

Zechariah 7

Introduction: There is a passage in Jeremiah that should be read by every believer at least once a week.

Jeremiah 17:7-10

⁷ *Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.*

⁸ *For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.*

⁹ *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

¹⁰ *I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*

The closer we walk with the Lord the stronger we are as is described in verses 7-8. But the heart is desperately wicked, and it can lead us away from the Lord if we are not careful.

The Jews whom Zechariah is addressing had come back from 70 years of captivity. Why was the captivity 70 years?

Leviticus 25:1-5

And the LORD spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying,

² *Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD.*

³ *Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof;*

⁴ *But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard.*

⁵ *That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land.*

Israel was to allow the land to rest every 7th year. As time went on, they neglected to do this, and this then brought the consequences.

Leviticus 26:14-15, 31-35

¹⁴ But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments;

¹⁵ And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant:

³¹ And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours.

³² And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it.

³³ And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

³⁴ Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths.

³⁵ As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it.

Israel had neglected 70 sabbath years/490 years and therefore they were sent into captivity for 70 years.

2 Chronicles 36:21

²¹ To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

I show you all of this because you need to know that the Jews full understood why the captivity had happened. Notice the warning from God in Deuteronomy 28.

Deuteronomy 28:48-50

⁴⁸ Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.

⁴⁹ The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand;

⁵⁰ A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young:

The Jews whom Zechariah had seen this play out if not personally they at least heard the details from their parents and grandparents. You would then think that they would be very careful. But that was not the case.

Notice Zechariah 7:1-3

The Jews set several men to inquire if they still needed to continue the fast. This was a fast they had developed and it was not of God.

Notice Zechariah 7:4-6

The fast meant nothing to God because it was empty. These people were just going through the motions. The more I read this the more I believe they were simply tired of practicing the fasts and they just wanted to forget about what had happened.

Application:

This was all empty worship. Their hearts were not in the fasts nor were their hearts in worshipping God. There were other things which they desired to do.

What about you, is your heart into worshipping God, or are you like the Jews and only going through the motions? Keep in mind God knows your heart better than you do. I can assure you that there are many people who attend church and their hearts are not in the worship. I know this because when you love the Lord it will show in your life.

Illustration: Remember the days of dating? When you loved your spouse before you were married you wanted to be together. The same is true in our relationship with God. When we love Him we have a desire to know Him more and to walk close by His side.

Let me get back to the Jews. They were growing cold after the return to their land. They had their houses and they were getting settled. They now were starting to fall back into the same practices that had landed them in the captivity.

I. The Answers from God Part 2

Notice Zechariah 7:7

Here in this verse God tells them that they would do well to remember the Words of the prophets when all was well in Jerusalem before the captivity. Let us notice some of what the prophets said.

Amos 5:21-24

²¹ *I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.*

²² *Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.*

²³ *Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.*

²⁴ *But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.*

What was happening in Zechariah's day was almost a mirror image of what had taken place many years before. In Zechariah's day they were back in the land and the temple was about half finished but they were falling back into sin.

Notice Zechariah 7:8

This introduces the second answer from God. The first answer exposed their empty worship. This answer will expose their sin.

Notice Zechariah 7:9

These are the Words which God spoke to the Jews before the captivity but they also pertain to the Jews of Zechariah's day. This verse and the next verse rebuked the Jews for how they treated other people. In this verse God call for true judgment, mercy and compassion.

➤ **True judgment**

This rebuke was against favoritism. They were not to show partiality when dealing with people. They were all to be treated the same when it came to judgment. The poor were being mistreated. This was exactly what happened before the captivity.

Amos 5:11-12

¹¹ *Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.*

¹² For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.

Application:

God despises favoritism within the church today. It is sin!

James 2:1-4, 9

My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

² For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

³ And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

⁴ Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

⁹ But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

➤ **Mercy and Compassion to every man his brother.**

This speaks of loving one another.

Application:

When we exercise love for one another these are characteristics that will be manifest in our lives.

John 13:34-35

³⁴ A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

³⁵ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Romans 13:8-10

⁸ Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

⁹ For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

¹⁰ Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

1 John 4:10-12

¹⁰ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

¹² No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Notice Zechariah 7:10

The Jews oppressed these groups of needy people. The Jews whom Zechariah was speaking to were falling into the same sins.

Application:

No one who oppresses the poor will get away with it.

James 5:1-7

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

² *Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten.*

³ *Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.*

⁴ *Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabbath.*

⁵ *Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.*

⁶ *Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.*

⁷ *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.*

Conclusion:

All of this is summed up in the Words of Jesus.

Matthew 7:12

¹² *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

⁴ *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,*

⁵ *Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*

⁶ *Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;*

⁷ *Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*