

"Empty Worship"

Part 3

Zechariah 7

Introduction: Last week in our study of Zechariah we continued to look at the warning which God had for the Jews that He sent through Zechariah. The Jews had returned from the captivity and were rebuilding the temple. Here in chapter 7 the temple is probably about one half way to completion, they have been back at the rebuilding now for 2 years after they had stopped due to persecution. The Jews were therefore getting settled into a regular routine as the temple nears completion. As things were getting close to normal again their hearts started to grow cold. They had developed 2 fasts when they went into captivity to commemorate the fall of Jerusalem and the death of the Jewish Governor of Judah, Gedaliah. Now that they were getting back to normal they wanted to know if they needed to continue the fasts.

Notice Zechariah 7:1-3

Most likely they had grown tired of keeping the fasts which were never established by God to begin with. Therefore they were looking to stop them. God answered their question but not in the way in which they expected.

Notice Zechariah 7:4-6

The fasts were not practiced for God but only for themselves. It was something that made them feel good or that made them look good. It was nothing but empty worship because it was not for God. Their heart was not in their worship of God and we know this because of what we see in the next verses.

Application: There are a couple of verses in Ecclesiastes that I want to share with you.

Ecclesiastes 1:9-10

⁹ *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.*

¹⁰ *Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.*

What was happening with Jews is also happening in many churches today. There are services that are carried out that make people feel good, but the worship is empty because it is not for God. People may leave with a "fuzzy" feeling inside but the truth is

that God is not in it. Their hearts are not in their worship and that is evident just as it was with the Jews. You see the Jews were not walking in obedience to the Word of God. That is what we shall see as we continue to move on. These Jews that Zechariah was writing to were going down the very same path that their fathers had walked, and it was a path of disobedience. I point all of this out because if our hearts are in our worship and it is done for God then this will show in the way that we conduct our lives. We will desire to walk in obedience to God.

John 14:15, 21-24

¹⁵ *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

²¹ *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

²² *Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?*

²³ *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

²⁴ *He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings*: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

Notice Zechariah 7:7-10

This is what we looked at last week. Greed was driving the Jews. They were partial in their judgment at the gate, they took advantage of the widows, fatherless, poor and the strangers. God had called them out prior to 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.*

Micah 5:1-2

Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand.

² *And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.*

Micah 3:1-3

And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?

² *Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones;*

³ *Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron.*

Here the leaders are likened to hunters who devoured God's people. They did not literally eat them, but they took advantage of them. **They practiced bribery, theft, oppression and even bloodshed.**

Now let us get back to the Jews of Zechariah's day. They were falling into the same practices. The leaders were to be caring for the people but instead they were using them for personal gain. What they needed to know was that this would not be permitted to continue. There would be consequences.

**I. The Answers from God
Part 3**

Notice Zechariah 7:11

God had sent the prophets to warn the Jews of what He would do. Let us notice the response to their warnings.

Jeremiah 19:8-11

⁸ *And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof.*

⁹ *And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.*

¹⁰ Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee,

¹¹ And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place to bury.

Jeremiah 20:1-2

Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who was also chief governor in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things.

² Then Pashur **smote Jeremiah** the prophet, and **put him in the stocks** that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD.

The prophets were hated for their message of warning.

Notice Zechariah 7:11-12

When God sent the prophets the people turned away from God and they made their hearts hard as stone/diamonds. Because they would not listen, they would experience great wrath from the Lord.

Application:

Let us understand that when we turn our backs upon the Lord and refuse to listen to His warnings individually or as a nation there will be consequences.

Numbers 32:23

²³ But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: **and be sure your sin will find you out.**

Hebrews 12:5-11

⁵ And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

⁶ For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

⁷ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

⁸ But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

⁹ Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

¹⁰ For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

¹¹ Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Chastening is for our profit.

Psalm 119:67, 71

⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

⁷¹ It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

When God's people refuse to listen the consequences can be very damaging.

Notice Zechariah 7:13

Here we see that because they would not listen to God when He cried to them o He would not listen to them when they cried to Him.

Application:

Unrepentant sin blocks our prayers from reaching the throne of God.

Psalm 66:18

¹⁸ If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

Notice what God said through Isaiah.

Isaiah 1:13-18

¹³ Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

¹⁴ *Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.*

¹⁵ **And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.**

¹⁶ *Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;*

¹⁷ *Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.*

¹⁸ *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

Notice Zechariah 7:14

The end result of their sin was the 70 years of captivity.

Conclusion/Application:

Let us notice the consequences of David's sin.

2 Samuel 12:7-11

⁷ *And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;*

⁸ *And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.*

⁹ *Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.*

¹⁰ *Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.*

¹¹ *Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.*