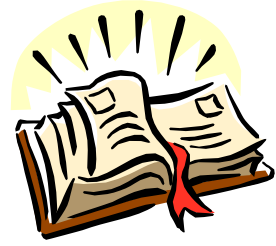


Welcome to: - Bible House of Grace.



God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Zechariah 7.

(2014)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man. As to such I neither claim special knowledge or perfect understanding.

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Zechariah 7.

Topics.

- The third time the word of the LORD came to Zechariah
- Israel fasted for their-own suffering and not over sin and for the LORD.
- Show justice, kindness and mercy to one another and do not think evil.
- Israel's fathers set their hearts diamond hard against the word of God.
- Israel did not heed the prophets of God so he did not listen to their prayers.

INTRODUCTION: the following introduction is quiet long, but it does help understand the the background of Zechariah, to skip the introduction scroll down to Zechariah chapter seven. As Haggai encouraged the returned Jewish exiles to rebuild the Temple, Zechariah encouraged them to repent and renew their covenant with God. Such spiritual renewal would be necessary for the people to be ready to worship God once the Temple was rebuilt (about 515 B.C.). Zechariah accused them of doing the very things their ancestors had done before the exile. He was concerned about social justice for widows, orphans, and foreigners. As the people endured opposition from the non-Jewish inhabitants of Judea, Zechariah reassured them of God's abiding comfort and care and that He would continue his covenant with Israel.

The Messianic hope was rekindled during Zechariah's ministry by the ordination of Joshua as priest and Zerubbabel as governor. From Zechariah chapter one through to the end there is a beautiful message of comfort and encouragement for the people of Israel during the era of Zechariah and for those who are rebuilding the temporal Temple of God, but as the visions progress through the chapters the focus slowly shifts from the era of Zechariah and transcends time to a future age where God is building an eternal Temple in the Lord Jesus Christ. The visions then progress to Jesus returning in glory and climax's in the final chapter with Christ reigning from Jerusalem as King over the entire earth and ends with the promise that the Lord would establish his rule over all the earth (Zechariah 14:9).

The historical background: twenty years after untied Israel returned from their seventy years in captivity to Babylon, the Temple was still a blackened ruin and the discouraged people did not see how it could be restored. At this critical moment God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the Jews to rebuild the Temple. The prophecies of the two men were delivered almost at the same time. Zechariah gives a series of eight symbolic night-visions, to encourage the Israelites to complete the Temple.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

The third time the word of the LORD came to Zechariah

The Word of the LORD came to Zechariah.

Zechariah 7:1 ----- ¹In 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.

Chislev: is the ninth month of the Hebrew ritual year.

Darius: was a common name for Medo Persian rulers.

Following are the three times the word of the LORD came to Zechariah.

1. The first time the word of the LORD came to Zechariah was in the eighth month of the second year of Darius the king of Persia. (Zech. 1:1).
2. The second time the word of the LORD came to Zechariah was the twenty fourth day of the eleventh month of the second year of Darius king of Persia. (Zech. 1:7).
3. The third time the word of the LORD came to Zechariah was in the ninth month of the fourth year of Darius the king of Persia. (Zech. 7:1).

The first prophecy was in the eighth month of the second year of Darius and the third prophecy was in the ninth month of the fourth year, so approximately two years have passed since the LORD spoke with Zechariah the first time.

According to tradition Cyrus had selected Darius his descendant to succeed him. Sometime between the reign of Cyrus and his descendant Darius the Jews had been mistreated and work on rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple had stopped. An appeal was made to Darius and he made search and discovered the original decree of Cyrus favouring the Jews, under his lenient reign the Jews restored the walls of the city and rebuilt the Temple (Ezra 4:1-6) (Ezra 6:1-15).

Israel Fasted for their-own Suffering and Not over Sin and for the LORD.

Zechariah 7:2-7 ----- ²Now the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech and their men to entreat the favor of the LORD, ³saying 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?" ⁴Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me (Zechariah) 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? ⁶And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves? ⁷Were 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?"

Bethel: was in the land of Canaan and allotted to Benjamin, Jeroboam built a worship center at Bethel containing a golden calf.

Now that the seventy year Babylonian captivity is over the people of Israel (the ten tribes) in the land of Samaria send Sharezer and Regem-melech and their men to Jerusalem to ask the priests if they should still fast and mourned in the fifth and seventh month.

The LORD tells Zechariah to ask the people of Israel and their priests, when, they fasted during the seventy year captivity were they fasting for the LORD or for themselves, then Zechariah tells them that they have the same attitude toward God as their fathers did prior to the seventy year captivity who were fasting because of tradition and over their own sorrow and suffering and not because of all the wickedness they had done before the LORD or to draw nearer to Him and set their hearts toward him in doing what is right. Their fasting was all about themselves and not because they cared about the LORD as the following verses show.

Show Justice, Kindness and Mercy to One Another and do Not think Evil.

Zechariah 7:8-10 ----- ⁸And the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying, ⁹"Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, ¹⁰do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart."

Zechariah is told to tell the people of Israel that the fasting the LORD requires is: -

- To keep true justice.
- To show kindness and mercy.

- Not to oppress the helpless and the poor (especially for one's own gain).
- Not to even think of planning or plotting any form of evil against others.

The LORD through Zechariah is basically telling the people it matters not how strictly they adhere to all their ceremonial rites, holy days and fasts and feast days it will all count for nothing if they continue to live their lives with a total disregard for justice (i.e., fairness for all) and do not show kindness and mercy to all people. Neither will their outward religious customs and tradition count for anything if they continue to oppress the helpless and the poor especially for their own gain and hold evil thoughts toward others in their heart especially if they are thoughts of how they can bring any form of evil (i.e., hurt and harm) against others.

Israel's Fathers set their Hearts Diamond Hard against the Word of God.

Zechariah 7:11-12 ---- ¹¹But they (Israel's former fathers) refused to pay attention (to the word of the LORD) and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. ¹²They 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.

Prior to the seventy year captivity God sent multitudes of prophets to warn Israel if they do not forsake their idols, pagan gods and gross evil the LORD'S wrath would come upon them, sadly they made their hearts diamond hard to the words of the prophets and because of this God's wrath was kindled against them.

This shines a light on the truth that we bring God's judgment upon ourselves Israel had become so grossly corrupt God being a God of Holiness, love and justice was forced to bring judgment upon them. Consider if an earthly father has a son who is a serial killer it matters not how much he may love his son or that he is his son he must deliver his son over to justice to protect the innocent and to stop him influencing others to do the same.

Following is a list of the sins that Israel's' former fathers committed throughout their generations. Eventually these sins became like a contagious virus running rampant throughout the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. They defiled God's Holy name and their own land by their lifestyle, deeds and actions. They committed gross idolatry and Baal altars were set up throughout their land. They worshipped the goddess of love and fertility (her worship was sexually indecent).

Worse than this they worshipped Moloch and sacrificed their sons to him in the Hinnom valley. They worshipped a golden calf at a religious centre at Dan and at a religious centre at Bethel. Altars were set up in the temple court for planetary worship and the worship of the host of heaven (i.e., the sun, moon and stars) and worship of idols and altars had been built under shady trees on their hills throughout their land.

Added to this innocent people were killed and cheated out of justice, leaders oppressed others for their own selfish gain and drunkenness, violence, robbery and gross sensuality was rampant. The rich cheated the innocent out of justice, and showed no sense of responsibility towards the poor and instead of relieving their economic distress they devised new means of depriving them of their property. Is it any wonder the LORD compares Israel's ways to the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity? (Ezek. 36:17) and poured out His wrath upon Judah, Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The Lesson for Today.

By wicked behaviour Israel defiled the name of God which resulted in the surrounding nations mocking and despising God. This shines a light on the following truth: the behaviour of everyone who confesses the name of God and Christ His Son will determine to some extent whether outsiders are drawn to God or to despise Him. We are not witnesses to the Lord only when we are sharing our faith with another person our entire life is a witness to our faith and of God it can be a good witness or a bad witness.

Israel did Not Heed the Prophets of God so He did Not Listen to their Prayers.

Zechariah 7:13-14 --- ¹³"As I (the LORD) called (Israel), and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear," says the LORD of hosts, 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."

The people of Israel (the ten tribes) prayed to God for help, but because they made their hearts diamond hard against the prophets of God and did not heed their messages God did not listen to their prayers, but instead sent a whirlwind into their land which scattered the people and destroyed their cities houses and farms.

The whirlwind God sent was Assyria: the LORD uses secular nations, kings, and people to achieve His plans and purposes, sometimes to bless and other times to bring judgment. He used Assyria to bring judgment on Israel (the ten tribes) in the land of Samaria. The armies of Assyria invaded the land, destroyed homes and farms and took the people captive and many fled to the surrounding nations for safety. Later the fierce and cruel armies of Babylon invaded the land of Judah, laid their farm land waste, attacked Jerusalem and pillaged the temple and took the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) into captivity.

After this great victory Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive so Israel and Judah were under Babylonian rule for seventy years. They went into captivity to Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and who were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods.

Archaeologists have found that all of the cities of Judah were completely destroyed at this time, thus ended the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated, and indeed, the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist. But the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the chosen people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel would be built.

Now here is the good news: while in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) and took by His right hand (Isaiah 45:1) to conquer the Empire of Babylon gave written permission for Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again)

Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a time of prosperity and peace followed

Sadly Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory: -

- God 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 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 (Zech. 12:10-14).

End.