

**BOOK OF ZECHARIAH
THE PROBLEM OF DISOBEDIENCE
PT 1-THE DEMANDS OF A JUST GOD
ZECHARIAH 7:7-10**

Introduction

We've said that this **third section** of the book of **ZECHARIAH** came **almost two years after the first two earlier sections of the book.**

Last week we saw how the **LORD** pointed out that the **SINS** of the generation that was taken into **BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY** were beginning to surface again in this generation.

These folks in **ZECHARIAH'S** day needed to comprehend that the **LORD** desired for them to have more of an **INNER SPIRITUAL REALITY** rather than just the **MEANINGLESS EXTERNAL WAYS OF FORMALISM** that they were involved in practicing.

The nation of **JUDAH** was re-emerging from its 70 years of **CAPTIVITY** in **BABYLON** and these returning exiles came to the **LAND** and were involved in rebuilding what had been **DESTROYED**. That was a good thing, but the **LORD** took time to remind them here of **WHY** all this had happened to begin with.

The **PEOPLE** of **JUDAH** had repeatedly **FAILED TO OBEY THE WORD OF THE LORD!** It was that **DISOBEDIENCE** that had led to the **DESTRUCTION** of the **TEMPLE** and the **LAND** and had caused the **NATION** to be carried away **CAPTIVE** to **BABYLON!**

Here we see that the **LORD** revealed to **ZECHARIAH** that some of the same fundamental errors that led to the utter **DESTRUCTION** of the **LAND** and **TEMPLE** and to the **CAPTIVITY** were beginning to be repeated by these who were back in the **LAND** of **JUDAH**.

Many of them were lapsing into the same **SOCIAL, MORAL, and ETHICAL SINS** that brought on the ruin of their fathers by a **FAILURE TO OBEY THE WORD OF THE LORD FROM THE HEART!**

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JUDAH needed to learn the lesson that now, just as before, the **NATION'S LIFE** centered around its **ATTITUDE TOWARD** and **RESPONSE TO THE WORD OF GOD!** So the **LORD** here used the **CONSEQUENCES** of **PAST DISOBEDIENCE** as **WARNINGS** and **EXAMPLES** for the present generation!

As we begin looking at **THE PROBLEM OF DISOBEDIENCE**, let's focus first on **THE DEMANDS OF A JUST GOD! (7-10)**

We saw last week how that the **LORD** revealed that the **JEW'S institution and practicing of all these various FASTS** that were associated with the different aspects of the **INVASION** and **DESTRUCTION** of **JERUSALEM** and the **TEMPLE** had only been of their **MOURNING OVER THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR SIN** rather than **MOURNING OVER THEIR SIN** itself!

The **LORD** directs them back to the **MESSAGES** of the former **PROPHETS** that were ignored by their forefathers!

In **verses 8-10**, the **LORD** renews the **OLD-TIME MESSAGE** with a basic summary or gist of the **MESSAGES** of the former **PROPHETS**.

In **verse 9**, the phrase "*Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying*" forms the introduction to this **AUTHORITATIVE DECLARATION FROM THE LORD!**

This is not **ZECHARIAH** saying anything other than what the **LORD** had told him to say! If the wayward **PEOPLE** and **PRIESTS** were to **OBEY THE WORD OF GOD**, they must hear **IT** and receive **IT** for what **IT** is!

The next two verses reveal **SOCIAL, MORAL, and ETHICAL** areas where **REPENTANCE** was needed. Basically, the **LORD** was wanting them to **REPENT OF THEIR WAYS** and begin walking in **HIS WAYS!**

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The **LORD GOD IS JUST**, and **HE** wanted **HIS PEOPLE** to **REFLECT HIS JUSTICE** (i.e. **TRUE JUDGMENT**) in their lives!

The **LORD GOD IS FULL OF MERCY AND COMPASSION**, and **HE** wanted **HIS people** **TO BE MERCIFUL AND KIND** as well!

It is note-worthy that **MAN'S DUTIES** to his **NEIGHBOR** are stressed.
1 John 4:20—“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

Let's look at these four **COMMANDS** or **TESTS OF SPIRITUAL REALITY** that the **LORD** gave the **PEOPLE** in *verses 9 and 10*.

- I. THEY WERE TO EXECUTE TRUE JUDGMENT!**
(Or, **EXECUTE JUDGMENT BASED ON THE TRUTH!**)
The word translated “*execute*” is **imperative** and means “*to judge or pronounce a sentence*”. The phrase translated “*Execute true judgment*” means “*to give a judicial decision based on the truth or objective evidence.*”

ADMINISTRATION of **JUSTICE** is to be **ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH!**

This **JUDGMENT BASED ON TRUTH** is **JUSTICE** that is to be exercised with **impartiality** by an **unbiased** weighing of all evidence and reaching a non-subjective (non-personal) rendering!

Leviticus 19:15—“Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.”

“*Executing true judgment*” is the task of seeing and making **just**, *moral, religious, spiritual, political, social* and *economic* decisions.

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Both individuals and leaders in **JUDAH** had been *guilty of exploiting people for personal gain*. Their **BEHAVIOR** in these matters revealed the **TRUE STATE** of their **HEARTS** as well as the **TRUE CHARACTER** of the **NATION!**

THEY WERE TO EXECUTE TRUE JUDGMENT OR JUDGMENT BASED ON THE TRUTH!

- II. THEY WERE TO SHOW MERCY AND COMPASSION TO THEIR BRETHREN!**

The word “*show*” means “*practice, to do or work.*”
Showing or practicing **mercy** (speaking of **kindness**) means that someone who is in a position to help, freely does.

The word **compassion** is related to the root word for **womb**. It indicates *a maternal kind of love that grows and matures others, a watching over those more helpless*.
(i.e. *natural affection*, which seems to be lacking in our day!)

They were to have a **brotherly attitude** toward each other characterizing those born from the same womb.

Mercy (or **kindness**) and **compassion** are to be the order of day between a man and his neighbor. **Kindness** and **compassion** are the two great demands of **righteousness** and **love**.
See Micah 6:6-8, Hosea 2:19-21.

- III. THEY WERE NOT TO OPPRESS OTHERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ARE MORE VULNERABLE!**

Verse 10 addresses categories of people who more **susceptible to being cheated, oppressed, or simply forgotten in society**. The **widow** and **fatherless** (or **orphan**) have much in common with the **stranger** and the **poor**.

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They represent the most common victims of oppression!

Deuteronomy 10:18—“He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.”

Isaiah 1:17—“Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”

REBUKE – *Isaiah 1:23*—“Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.”

REBUKE – *Jeremiah 5:28*—“They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.”

James 1:27—“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

Those mentioned in *verse 10* are **the more defenseless members of society without the social position or economic means to stand up for themselves** and so **they are particularly exposed to the wiles of godless men.**

Therefore each is singled out as not to be taken advantage of in their **helplessness**. Those who do so plainly manifest their **greed** and **godlessness**.

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IV. THEY WERE NOT TO IMAGINE EVIL AGAINST A BROTHER!

GOD’S people were not even to ***think of evil to do against another***. After mentioning outward manifestations of wrongdoing the prophet cites the ***root of evil*** from which such wrongs come from, but cannot be so readily seen—***i.e. the evil plans of the heart!***

Jesus said in *Mark 7:21-23*—“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.”

True morality measures the thoughts and deeds according to the motives of the heart. The secret longing of the heart must be pure. *Micah 2:1*—“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.”

This is not only talking about ***designs*** but ***desires*** to get back at (***i.e. revenge***) or ***attitudes of ill-will, vindictiveness or animosity***. But it was to show them (and us) that ***it is in the heart where true religion must begin***.

The clear inference is that these people who had been restored to the land needed to **REPENT** (*change their way of their **thinking** and **living** - make a 180 degree turn*) and they needed to begin to practice this ethical teaching and that would turn their **FASTING** from mere ***formalistic legalism*** and ***hypocrisy*** into that of ***seeking the face of GOD***. **GOD seeks TRUTH in the INWARD LIFE and expects it be MANIFESTED OUTWARDLY to those about us.**

Conclusion

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So, what about the original question raised by the **DELEGATION** concerning their **TRADITIONAL MOURNINGS** and **FASTINGS**? How was it answered?

By pointing out the **TRUE ISSUES** of their **INDIFFERENCE** and **DISOBEDIENCE** to **THE WORD OF THE LORD!**

Instead of a comparatively insignificant issue, the **LORD** pointed to their **MOTIVE**, to the underlying **CAUSE OF EVIL** of which they had not yet truly **REPENTED**.

These **TRADITIONS** of **MOURNINGS** and **FASTINGS** were nothing to the **LORD** in and of themselves, so long as there was no real **SORROW** for their **SIN** and a **HEARTFELT DESIRE** to do **HIS WILL** as expressed in **HIS WORD!**

So, in comparison their **RITUAL** observing of **FASTS** or **TRADITIONS** was an unimportant matter. **OBEYING THE WORD OF THE LORD** was the all-important question they faced.

If they would **HONESTLY FACE** this issue, then the question they asked would automatically be answered.

The question that each of us need to ask ourselves is, "*Am I being indifferent to the Word of God?*" Read *Romans 11:20-23*.

Are we sure that **OUR** conduct can stand up to the **LORD'S** scrutiny? When we **WORSHIP GOD** and engage in our **RELIGIOUS DUTIES**, are we giving **HIM THE FIRST PLACE** in our thinking that is rightfully **HIS**? Or, are we just going through the motions?