

## Reality and Blessing: Encouragement on the Road of Faith

Zechariah 7-8

The temple in Jerusalem was being rebuilt (Yay!), but all was not well. A delegation arrives with a question for the priests. Zechariah senses a deeper issue, and God gives him four messages that expose our hearts.

A Question from Bethel: “Do we need to keep fasting?” (7.1-3)

### Four Messages for God’s People

- Wrong motives: God wants a relationship, not religion. (7.4-7)
- Wrong conduct: Repent for sin and show compassion. (7.8-14)
- Blessings for those who speak truth and make peace. (8.1-17)
- Fasts will become feasts in the coming Kingdom! (8.18-23)

### The ‘Moral of the Message’

- Treat sin like COVID or cancer: It’s serious!
- Intentionally let God’s truth infect your life!
- Live for the King, and look toward the coming Kingdom!



1. Compare Zech. 1.7 with 7.1. How long has it been since Zechariah had his visions in the night? When was the temple building project begun (see Haggai 1.14-15)? When was the temple completed (see Ezra 6.15)? How far along was the temple rebuilding project when the delegation from Bethel came to Jerusalem?
2. It’s often dangerous to ‘read into’ the wording of Scripture, but the question of the delegation from Bethel is an exception. Notice their words in 7.3. They ask, *Should we continue to mourn and fast each summer on the anniversary of the Temple’s destruction, as we have done for so many years?* (NLT) What is the ‘feel’ of their question?
3. God’s first response through Zechariah (7.4-7) exposes a deeper issue. What is it (vv5-6)? Verse 7 makes it clear that this is not the first time God has had this issue with Israel! In effect, God says to them, “How many times do I have to tell you this?!” For examples of prophets from centuries before telling Israel the same thing, see Isaiah 1.11-20; Hosea 6.4-6; Amos 5.21-24; Micah 6.6-8. Is this a message God’s people still need to hear today?
4. The second message from the Lord (7.8-14) flows out of the first message. God wants His people to be *real* with Him, not perform *rituals* for Him! He looks at our *hearts* (1 Sam. 16.7)! Bonus: How has the social justice movement in our day ‘counterfeited’ the call to real submission to God?
5. The third message (8.1-17) is a lengthy reminder that God is “for” Israel, and has great plans for her, which she will have a hard time even believing (v6)! He is ready to bless her (vv9-15)! What does God tell them do in order to receive this blessing in vv16-17?
6. The final message (8.18-23) is craaaazy! God finally answers the question the delegation from Bethel asked (7.3). See the phrase ‘in those days’ in v23? What are ‘those days’? When will this happen? What, then, is the *overall* message of Zechariah 7-8?