

Q9. How desirable will be this revived Jerusalem? Read 8:20-23. Try to picture what Zechariah describes. Does that picture thrill you? Does God have a vision for the nations? What is it? This had been a long held vision (see Isaiah 2:1-5).

Q10. What lesson do we get from this for today's church? For BBC? Are we to wait for what God will do over in Israel today?

For further study Consider these New Testament verses on Israel & the church:

John 4:19-24

Matthew 23:37-24:2

Matthew 28:18-20

Acts 1:6-8

Romans 11:1-36

Ephesians 2:11-22

Zechariah Study 4

From Fasts To Feasting

Zechariah Chapters 7 & 8

The Old Testament prophets Haggai and Zechariah were sent from God to His remnant people in Jerusalem. This remnant had recently returned from Babylon to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. After 70 years in exile, God had remarkably opened up this opportunity and was determined to encourage and inspire them to complete this task. The prophets had called the leaders Zerubbabel (the governor) and Joshua (the High Priest) and the remnant to get on with the task and had told them not to fear the nations for God would judge and deal with them. They had commenced prophesying in 520 BC and the people responded well by returning to the Lord and to the task of building the temple. It was now 2 years later and great progress had been made. The completion of the temple was in sight, when the Word of the Lord again came to Zechariah. This was recorded in chapters 7 & 8.

Thinking began to anticipate how different life would be when the community and temple would finally be restored. Specifically, they considered the appropriateness of fasting which had been so dominant during their past time of national disgrace, judgement and humiliation. Should religious practice be any different when the temple is finished? They were thinking ahead.

Fasting had been a large part of their worship since the destruction of Jerusalem, possibly having been held regularly at the remaining rubble site of the destroyed temple at Jerusalem. It is possible that the five poems of what became the biblical book of Lamentations may have even been composed for use on these occasions. The fast on the fifth month of the year marked the month of the temple's destruction (v3), but this was not the only month on which a fast was held (see v5, 18-19).

After initially raising the overall topic of fasting (see 7:1-3) the prophesy seems to divide itself into 4 sections each commencing with the same phrase "...the Word of the Lord of hosts came ... (See 1:4, 8; 8:1, 18)

Q 1.How did the religious issue of fasting come to be considered? Who brought it up? (7:1-3) What was their specific question? What situation had changed? Should religious rituals and practices be meaningful and expressive of the believers heart? Explain.

Q2.In the first part of the Lord's response (Zechariah 7:4-7), He asks three hard-hitting counter questions. What were they and what do they imply?

Q3."The kind of fasting God requires is not to abstain from food, but to abstain from sin" Is that true? Read Zechariah 7:8-13. What did the rebellious people prefer to do that made a mockery of their fasting. Was their any genuine repentance before God? What was God's response to their fasting and religion? When is religion wrong?

Q4.The prophet Isaiah was one of those former prophets who brilliantly exposed the religious hypocrisy that the people had ignored and had led to the exile. Read Isaiah 58:1-14 for an excellent example of his hard hitting preaching. How important is a repentant heart to the Lord, rather than wanting something from the Lord when we fast?

Q5.In Zechariah 8:1-8 the Lord explains His vision that drives Him in His dealings with His people. What are the features of this picture He describes?

Q6.In 8:9-13 the Lord speaks of a change of fortune to a tremendous time of blessing. These are words that we would all love to apply to us. Who explicitly is the Lord speaking to (v9)

Both Haggai and Zechariah have repeatedly contrasted the difference in blessing that has come upon the community since the people repented and recommenced building the temple. The Lord has again been with them to bless (See Haggai 1:5-6, 9-11; 2:15-19 and now Zechariah 8:10-13. What were the observable differences?

What lessons can we learn from reading of their time of blessing?

Q7.What does the Lord say His people should do if these good times are to continue? Should they be complacent? (8:14-17)

Q8.In these times of revival and blessing will religious fasting or feasting be appropriate? (8:18-19) Is God a kill joy? What does God want more than anything else?