

## **Kings and Prophets 17-11-09**

This is Thursday the 9th of November, 2017. We continue our study together this evening of Kings and Prophets. We are in the book of Zechariah and we will be resuming tonight in Chapter 7. Let's take a moment as we begin to ask the Lord's blessing on our time of fellowship and concentration on the truth of His Word, and then we'll begin.

Father, thank You for this opportunity that we have to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus through the study of Your Word, the ministry of Your Spirit, the fellowship of like-minded believers, and the outworking of Your grace in our lives in so many ways. We thank You for provision and protection. We thank You for safe travel.

We thank You for bringing us together at this time to receive the benefits that are ours through the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You most of all for Him and for our privileges in Him that include being able to come and represent ourselves before Your throne and bring what might seem to be small concerns related to ourselves when we think of the immensity and the grandeur of Your plan and purpose across the ages. And yet we know that You are intimately aware of every circumstance and every opportunity.

And we pray that as we spend this time looking at Your Word and this part of Your Word, that Your Holy Spirit will be our teacher and help us to see how we can exploit all of these wonderful gifts and all of the tremendous grace that You have expressed toward us and fulfill Your plan and purpose for us both now and in the ages to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, we saw last time the complete set of eight visions that Zechariah received in a single night and the import of those. You think about being one of the original recipients of the message that Zechariah communicated. And even if you don't remember all of the details of the horsemen in the myrtle woods or the horns in the craftsmen or the man with the measure or Joshua the high priest with his dirty robes being exchanged or the gold lamp stand and the two trees and all of those other things.

What is left in our hearts and in our minds after hearing that sequence of messages? God is intimately aware. He uses His angelic minions and messengers. You can guess at how symbolic and how practical this is.

But God is aware of the situation of His people. He is aware of all of the factors around us. Whether it is those who seem to be in control of our destiny.

For Israel it was the surrounding nations. It was those who had taken them captive. Those who had oppressed them in times past, in times present and even by anticipation those that might do so in the future.

And so the assurance that comes through Zechariah's message is God is aware and God is in

control. If you summarize all of the implications of those promises of restoration, of protection, of provision, of dealing with the enemies at the right place and the right time and in the right way judgment on sin will be completed so that the high priestly function represented by Joshua can be accomplished and God's people who love Him that remnant who respond to the call and are faithful can draw near. God has made provision.

He has protection. He has providences in so many ways. And if we don't remember any more than that out of those eight visions this passage will have largely done its work to encourage us to rest in what God knows, in who God is, what God has done and what God is going to do.

That's really the bottom line of that whole section. So we resume tonight now in chapter 7 where a question arises. Now remember the situation.

Where are we in history? You had the united monarchy. You had Saul at the beginning. That didn't go too well.

David comes to the throne and pretty soon he unites all of the tribes. He starts out in Hebron. He eventually moves his capital to Jerusalem.

He greatly expands and extends the kingdom. He fights wars. He subdues the enemies around about.

His son Solomon takes the throne. And you have this tremendous zenith apex time of the kingdom of Israel. Immediately after in the days of Rehoboam it splits.

And you have Rehoboam and Jeroboam in the north. And then you have that whole history that we have reviewed throughout Kings and Chronicles of the gradual disintegration and dissolution. First in the northern kingdom and finally in Judah.

Assyria takes out the northern kingdom. Almost takes out Judah but there's kind of a last gasp of spiritual renewal there. And they go on for another 150 years.

Eventually Judah goes into captivity. Now the captives have begun to return. Now there is the opportunity to rebuild the destroyed temple.

And through the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah you have the impetus to not let that fall to the ground. Which it had already done. But their focus is to remember that although building the temple is the immediate project it is not the panacea.

Building the temple is not going to bring back the glory days of David and Solomon. In fact those glory days are not going to return until far in the future. What it is mainly designed to do is to serve as an anticipation.

By building that temple in that day. That temple is a physical reminder of the promises that God has made about the future temple. The future kingdom.

The future Messiah. The future prosperity. And not just returning to the glory days of David and Solomon but surpassing them.

The whole earth will be subordinate and will be bringing its glory in through the gates of Jerusalem. In those days. So it is an earnest.

It is sort of a down payment. God says if you demonstrate faithfulness and obedience in doing this task that I put before you. Don't think that this is the whole thing.

It's not really about the physical temple. That's just what your assignment is right now. What God's hope is, if I can use that term, is that their hearts will catch the flame of his promises.

That hope and expectation and a long view of resurrection and of kingdom renewal in the days of the coming millennium. Will be their guiding motivation. That's what this is really about.

So they begin. They flag. It stays dormant for many years.

Haggai and Zechariah come along and they call them not only to resume the building but to understand the reasons why. It isn't like as soon as you finish this building, if you build it he will come. It isn't really the idea.

If you build it with the right heart and with the right spirit. And if you cultivate in yourself that understanding of God's grander plan. You are being fitted for the future kingdom.

The future glory. The future prosperity. This is your opportunity now.

So, now that the temple is underway. And now that there really is some sign that things are getting better. A question comes.

There's a town that we've heard of. 10 or 12 miles north of Jerusalem called Bethel. Bethel.

What do you know about Bethel? If you think about it, you know how it got its name. Jacob. Jacob stopped and spent the night.

And it used to have a previous name. This is like Bible trivia time. Just shaking off the rust flakes a little bit here.

Remember he laid his head on a rock and saw the angel ladder. Angels ascending and descending. And he woke up and he said, you know, God is in this place.

And he built an altar and he called the name of the place Bethel. Formerly it was called Luz. L-U-Z.

It went from a place where you lose to a place where you have Bethel. House of God. So, Bethel.

Well, some people come down from Bethel. Look at chapter 7 here in Zechariah. In the fourth year of King Darius it came to pass the word of the Lord came to Zechariah on the fourth day,

ninth month, Kislev.

When the people sent. And notice people is in italics. These guys were sent.

It doesn't say who sent them. When Sherezer, Regem-Melek, and his men are sent to the house of God to pray before the Lord and to ask the priests who are in the house of the Lord of Notice there's now some worship function going on in this newly reconstructed temple. Not sure that it's finished, but it reminds me.

Have you ever attended a church? I have on a couple of occasions where they finally got the walls up and maybe the floor is still concrete. Maybe it's folding chairs instead of pews. But the structure is complete enough that you can come in there and actually start worshiping even before it's fully finished.

You get the idea that that might be the phase here in the fourth year of Darius. So they come to the house of God to pray before the Lord and to ask the priests who are in the house of the Lord of hosts and the prophets saying, Should I weep in the fifth month and fast as I have done for so many years? So what is this all about? Should I pray and weep in the fifth month as we've done for so many years? Well, so this is a fast that is scheduled in the fifth month. When we were sort of doing some of our anticipation of this book in past weeks, you remember that this was a man-made fast.

You can't find this in Deuteronomy. It's not in Leviticus. It doesn't have anything to do with Passover, unleavened bread, first fruits, Feast of Weeks.

It doesn't go to the Fall Feast. It doesn't get into Yom Kippur. It doesn't get into the Day of Atonement.

It doesn't get into Tabernacles. God said nothing about this. So they've got a fast going in the fifth month.

So what is it? Well, actually, this fifth month fast was something that commemorated the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple that took place under Nebuchadnezzar back in the days of Zedekiah. You can find this detailed, and you don't have to turn there now because we're going to see it here in a minute. But it's, among other things, not only at the end of 2 Kings, but also in Jeremiah.

It's another one of those stereoscopic views that we get in Scripture because it's such an important event. But in the 11th year of Zedekiah and in the fifth month, Nebuchadnezzar's forces come in and burn the city of Jerusalem and destroy the Temple, haul everybody off captive. That's when it happened.

So this is the most significant commemoration. And every year on that anniversary, it's like people now, on September the 11th every year, think back. There was a horrible catastrophe on 9-11.

Well, this was their 9-11. So every year in the fifth month, they had a time of fasting and weeping and woe is me. Well, now they're coming down, and they can stand on the spot.

They can come back to a largely rebuilt city of Jerusalem, and they're coming back to the beginnings of the rebuilding of God's house. So they say, well, should we continue to weep and fast? And they've come down to ask the priests. Well, here's the thing.

It grew up as a tradition, and it doesn't have any scriptural authority, so it's a little strange that you would come to the priest and say, should we continue? Who should you ask? You would ask God, and to whom would you speak if you wanted to ask God a question? What is the priestly function? The priestly function is to maintain the teaching rituals, which served as the word of God back in the days before people had written copies. What has largely begun to replace that as a form of communication, especially in the days when there is no temple ritual, because there is no temple, and they're not even in Jerusalem. So what office has arisen in actually both the northern and southern kingdom? If you've got a question for God, who do you ask? Let me put this another way.

What office does Zechariah fulfill? Would you say Zechariah the priest? He's descended from a priest, but what's his main job? He is a prophet. You'd ask a prophet, right? Go to the prophet. The prophet, bring me a musician or whatever, and then pretty soon, if you've got an important question, he'll go to God.

They don't go to Zechariah. They don't go to Haggai. They don't go to any of the other manifestly identified and functioning prophets.

They go to the priest. What does a priest almost by definition represent? What did Topal, was that his name, when you watch Fiddler on the Roof? What's his most famous song from that whole play and movie? Tradition! Remember that? Fiddler on the Roof, Tradition! Tradition! We've got this tradition going. Let's go to the guys who are all about maintaining traditions and ask them what do we do about this tradition.

It's not, what would God have us do? It's, are we in line with the latest thinking on traditions to continue this tradition? This is a bit like, if you have a question about whether or not you ought to be water baptized, and so you go to people for whom that's a definitional thing and say, should I be baptized? What do you think they're going to say? If you go to a Baptist church and say, well, I'm just wondering if I should be baptized or not, what's their answer going to be? But of course, it's our view that water baptism is essential. If you don't have a burning desire to be water baptized, you're probably not saved, according to that particular persuasion. And so they're going down to ask somebody who pretty much the answer is going to be a given.

Well, of course, we're all about, we're the keepers of traditions. And they're going to be all the way down to and through the time of Christ, aren't they? The priests, more about them shortly. So, what happens here? When these guys come from Bethel, and they ask the priests who are in the house of the Lord of hosts, and the prophets, saying, should I weep in the fifth month

and fast as I have done for so many years? Well, we don't get a priestly answer, but we get a prophetic answer, because God, through the prophets, not through the priests, gives an answer.

The word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, say to all the people of the land and to the priests. Why does he say, say this to the priests? Priests are given the wrong answer. See how this works? It's the prophet.

It is the fourth teller. It is the proclaimer of the word of God that's going to have a word from God. Say to the people of the land and to the priests, and then he's going to give an answer.

Now, just stop and think before we get into the answer. What is the question? What is the question? Should we perpetuate this fast? And when people came to Jesus and asked questions like this, should we pay taxes to Caesar? Is it lawful for this? Why do your disciples do that? How did Jesus typically respond? Did he say a simple yes or a simple no? What is Jesus' unvarying response when somebody asks him a question? He asks them a question, right? Where does he get that? Well, he takes after his father, because his father is going to do the same thing right here. God the Father is going to say the very same thing.

So they've come to the prophet sort of indirectly. You get the idea that they went to the house of the Lord where the priests hang out, but the prophet's got the word, and so God sends an answer back. Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, and here's a question.

When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months, now remember, they only asked about the fifth month, because that's the biggie, that's the commemoration. There were actually, and we're going to see it here in just a little bit, there were actually four additional feasts. They, in the intervening century since the destruction of Jerusalem, they had invented not one, not two, not three, but four.

This is like a 9-11 commemoration and inventing Kwanzaa, and inventing Cinco de Mayo, they just came up with all of these feasts. They had four different feasts, in addition to God's feasts out of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. And some of them landed on the same day.

It's like taking Dance Around the Maypole and turning it into Easter, only in reverse. It's like taking the winter solstice, and instead of turning it into Christmas, you take Christmas and turn it into the winter solstice. You take some secular happening in history, and substitute the commemoration of that for something that God ordained in His Word.

So, when they come and ask about the fifth, like so many things in Scripture, this is just the tip of the iceberg. This is representative of everything. And if they get a yes answer for, yes, you should keep on doing the fifth, well, okay, all of these others are on as well, and we've kind of taken in charge of the worship of God, and now we can innovate in so many other ways.

So, this is a very pregnant question. Yes, I said pregnant. It's a pregnant question.

Why? Well, how much of modern Christian worship is an accretion of human traditions? How much of the environment is humanly designed, and is a copy of what happened before us, before them, before them, before them? And how much of it is from God? How much of church structure? How much of church format? How much of church ritual? How much of church leadership? How much of church emphasis? How much of mission, and application, and implication, and all of it, is just of human manufacture, and not actually traceable back to authority from Scripture? Well, God is about to answer that question. So they say, well, should we continue to do this tradition that we got from our parents, who decided they should fast in this way? Is fasting good or bad? Trick question, isn't it? It depends. Why are you fasting? Ask the Apostle Paul, and he says, you don't gain anything by observing feasts, and new moons, and sabbaths, and fasting, and all of that, unless your heart is right.

Do you gain anything from rebuilding the temple? You do, if your heart's right. Do you gain anything from looking out for widows and orphans, in and of itself? No. You do, if your heart's right.

Do you gain anything from plunking a bag of money in the temple coffers, while Jesus and his disciples are watching? It depends. This is really the turning point in the Old Testament. These minor prophets in particular, where the emphasis shifts from the law to the heart.

I desire mercy and not sacrifice. That's in your minor prophets, right? So what does he say? When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those 70 years, did you really fast for me? Then he repeats it. For me, capital M. Why were they mourning and crying? What's the occasion in the fifth month? What's their 9-11? What got destroyed? Two things.

The city and the temple. In the fifth month, 11th year, Zedekiah, the city and the temple got destroyed. They weep over it.

They weep over it every year, annually, afterward. Why? Is it because the dwelling place of God and the presence of God in their midst is no longer available? Or is it personal? I miss my city. I miss that familiar environment.

I miss the old forms and the old ways. God says, is it my honor and my glory that you are mourning and weeping over? Or is it the change in your physical circumstances that resulted in destruction and captivity? Well, of course, it's the latter. It's the destruction and the captivity.

If they had cared anything about God, they would have never reached that point. The reason they lost the temple and the reason they lost the city is because they no longer cared about God. So commemorating the judgment isn't because they're all unhappy that God's presence is no longer immediate and available and no longer the defining characteristic of their nation.

They're weeping for themselves. Boo-hoo, boo-hoo. Not in the land, don't have the city.

It all got destroyed. We're victims. And so God answers their question with a question.

Should you continue to observe it? Well, why do you observe it? You observe it because you're feeling sorry for yourselves. It isn't that you care anything about God, so why are you asking for a godly authority answer when the whole thing doesn't have anything to do with God to begin with? So the question sort of answers their question. When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink for yourselves? Should you not rather have obeyed the words which the Lord proclaimed throughout the former prophets when Jerusalem and the cities around it were inhabited and prosperous? And by you, he's obviously talking about the forefathers.

You know, you all, you people of God. Should you not have cared enough about God that this would have never happened in the first place? So that is the first of four answers to their question. They ask one question, they're going to get four answers.

The reason they're going to get four answers is sort of symmetrical because they're really asking about four fasts. They didn't just have a fast in the fifth month. They had a fast in the fourth month, a fast in the seventh month, and a fast in the tenth month.

Each of them related to the destruction and captivity. So they ask one question, but God is going to respond four times, and each of them is a prong back in the direction of these fasts. So answer number one is what we just saw in verses four through seven.

That's number one. Question, was it really for me? Capital M. Answer, obviously not. If it had been, I mean by definition, it wouldn't have happened.

The second answer begins in verse eight and goes through verse 14. And if you've got a New King James like mine, you've got the last half of chapter seven is demarcated with a heading that says disobedience resulted in captivity. That's answer number two to this question.

And you can see the markers here because in verse four it said, the word of the Lord of hosts came to me saying. That's your marker of a complete and integrated message. Now look at verse eight.

The word of the Lord came to Zechariah saying. So this is a new and separate answer. Thus says the Lord of hosts, execute true justice, show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother.

Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil against his brother. Where? In your heart.

Where do these things come from? What is it that they are not doing when they observe the fast? It's not a heart for God and it's not a heart for their fellow Israelites. It's not love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself. It's an opportunity to cry the blues about a past disaster.

So the first answer is why are you doing what you're doing? The second answer is this is what you should be doing. If you're going to look back at that judgment and be chastened by it, it would prompt you to a new heart and a new attitude, a new mind, a new way of living, a new

set of priorities. So even now, what would be our interpretation and application? We can all think about low points in our lives, some of them of our own making, some of them circumstantial, some of them brought on by others.

When we think back on those things, it's easy to have a heavy heart, to shed tears, to have regret. We can have a huge amount of remorse over our own failures of various kinds. But what does God say? If the problem in the past was ever that you weren't doing what you were doing for me, the answer now as you reflect back on that is not to continue to sorrow and weep and beat yourself up fast, deny yourself something.

Well, things went badly back then, so let me do some kind of hair shirt, some self-flagellation, abnegation. I'll penalize myself now. I'll climb up the Scala Santa with my bare knees and get all bloody like the Catholics do over there in Italy.

God says, if you're going to think back on times of failure and times when things got bad, it should motivate you to remember capital M, M, me, God. And what does the Lord require of you, oh man? Remember that? What does the Lord require of you? To do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before your God, right? Justice and mercy. What does this say here? True justice, show mercy and compassion, everyone to his brother.

Notice there's a beautiful symmetry here. What's the last word in verse 9? Brother. What's the last word in verse 10? Brother.

Verse 9 are the positives. True justice, show mercy, compassion to a brother. Verse 10 are the do nots.

Don't oppress the widow. Don't oppress the fatherless. Don't persecute the alien.

Don't oppress the poor. Don't plan evil in your heart against your brother. Here is what you do for your brother.

Here is what you don't do against your brother. It could not be more clear, could not be more plain. And God says, if you're going to do some things for me, it's going to reflect itself in how you treat your brother.

Look at your relationships. Look at your dealings, your attitudes, your actions toward your brother. Your fellow believers are in view here.

But look at verse 11. They refused to heed. They shrugged their shoulders and stopped their ears so that they could not hear.

We don't want to hear that. They made their hearts like flint. Notice their heart wasn't sovereignly bestowed like flint.

It wasn't created by God in eternity past for ordained to be flint. How did their heart get flinty? They made their hearts like flint. We have choice.

We have will that we exercise. They made their hearts like flint. They refused to hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets.

This message is as old as the people of God. It was delivered to the fathers. It was delivered to the children.

It's been delivered to every generation. Thus great wrath came from the Lord of hosts. Therefore, it happened just as He proclaimed.

Remember, we went back and reviewed in Deuteronomy the blessings and curses on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. It's not like God didn't tell them. If you obey, if you heed, one of you will put to flight a thousand and so on.

Your crops will prosper. You'll plant one seed and a hundred will come up. All of those wonderful prosperity promises.

But if you disobey and go after the gods of the land, if you are hard-hearted, if you are insensate, if you do not heed, and this in a nutshell is what He's reviewing. Just as He proclaimed, they would not hear. They called out and I would not listen, says the Lord of hosts.

But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all nations where they had not known, which they had not known. Thus the land became desolate after them so that no one passed through or returned for they made the pleasant land desolate. And God is speaking in a godlike way here.

He's reflecting on the past, but He is telling them about the present and He is predicting the future all at once. This is one of those timeless proclamations that you can see fulfilled in the past. There is a potential for it in the present which is actually going to be fulfilled.

And there is a future application in any generation that does this. These things are going to happen. It just resonates and reverberates up and down the corridors of history.

That's the second answer. Hardness of heart, disobedience to the word is evident in the treatment of brothers. And of course brother is in the generic sense here, specifically the widows, the fatherless, the alien.

God says you need to be sensitive to those who are less fortunate in the community. And this is specifically the believing community. A brother, he doesn't say go to some far off land, go find the Persian ghettos and see if you can help somebody in the slums.

He says look for the widows, the fatherless, and the aliens in your land. Those who have come to Israel because they are looking for God. Those are the targets of charity.

This is why in the best of all worlds we as believers find charities that we can contribute to that meet the needs of people who have some sort of seeking heart, who are in some way amenable or willing to listen at least to the gospel and to the opportunity to come to Christ. So that we're plowing some of the resources that God puts under our stewardship into God's

work, God's people, God's future kingdom. Not salving our conscience by tossing it out to people for whom it will probably make no difference.

You hand some alcoholic a lot of money, he's going to buy booze. You hand a drug addict some money, he's going to buy drugs. You finance and underwrite the godless and self-serving lifestyle of someone, you get no credit for that.

Maybe you get a credit on your taxes, but there's no credit at the heavenly judgment. So we want to be charitable, but we want to find ways to express that where it counts. And it counts either in reality or in potentiality for those who are going to come to God through Christ.

Or at least we help create the potential for that. But there's got to be a Godward view in our charity or it is a waste of resources and it's actually bad stewardship. God doesn't even provide for the godless.

The rain falls on the just and the unjust. Rain's not food. Rain's not clothing.

Rain's not shelter. Rain provides potential for somebody who wants to work and wants to... Even charity in Israel among the people of Israel was we're helping you help yourself. And it is in the godly community.

Anyway, that's what you have here in the second. The third begins in chapter eight. Again, the word of the Lord of Hosts came saying.

So there's your marker for this third part of the answer. Thus says the Lord of Hosts, I am zealous for Zion with great zeal, with great fervor I am zealous for her. Thus says the Lord, I will return to Zion and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth, the mountain of the Lord of Hosts, the holy mountain. There is a tremendous emphasis here and a double subject, a double target. If you read a lot of the Bible references, commentaries and encyclopedias and so on, even as great an authority, and I respect him beyond almost anybody, but Dr. Wolvard, former president of Dallas Theological Seminary, came up under Lewis Barry Chafer and was the president emeritus when I went to DTS.

Tremendous, tremendous student of the word of God. But if you read his commentary on Zechariah, when he gets to this part, he says, well, here Zion and Jerusalem are interchangeable terms. And with great respect and humility, I disagree.

Zion and Jerusalem are not the same thing. And that's why God differentiates here what he's going to do. He says, I am zealous for Zion with great zeal.

With great fervor, I am zealous for her. Now, just out of your own general Bible knowledge, if I said, okay, everybody close your books, take out a pencil, I got one question for you and you need to write one sentence answer. What would you say is the difference between Zion and

Jerusalem? Zion and Jerusalem.

In one word, what is Jerusalem? It is a city. In one word, what is Zion? It is a mountain. It is the mountain of the Lord.

I believe if you read far enough here, in verse three, you find out that God himself says, the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain. He doesn't say the city of the Lord of hosts, the holy city. We talk about the holy city.

God here is talking about the holy mountain. What is he zealous about? What is he greatly zealous about and emphatically zealous about? The city or the mountain? The mountain. What got built on the mountain? The city? The temple, right? Now, what is it that the fast of the fifth month commemorates? What happened pretty much all in the same month there that they're weeping and mourning about? Destruction of the temple and the destruction of the city.

God says, yeah, I've got a concern for the city, but my concern is the mountain. Read verse two and three again. What's emphasized here? I am zealous for Zion with great zeal, with great fervor, I am zealous for her.

Thus says the Lord, I will return to Zion and I will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. What's in the midst of Jerusalem, especially now? Not Zion. Even when he says the midst of Jerusalem, he's talking about Zion.

He doesn't say, I'm jealous for Jerusalem, I'm going to take up residence somewhere down straight, you know, the Via Dolorosa or something, straight streets in Damascus. But Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth. Why? Because God has resumed occupancy on Mount Zion.

It's the temple. And it's not this temple that they're building that doesn't have any of the former glory and that Herod is going to have to refurbish and that Jesus says there won't be two stones on top of another. It's Zion.

I'm sorry, but they are not the same thing. Zion is not a synonym for Jerusalem and Jerusalem is not a synonym for Zion. Are they closely related? Yes.

But if God distinguishes them in the same sentence, my humble submission is we should figure out the difference. It's important. It's important.

Zealous for Zion. And look at the chiasm in verse 3. There's a beautiful, quick, chiastic structure there. I will return to Zion and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.

When he says the midst of Jerusalem, that's a synonym for Zion. Zion is in the midst of Jerusalem, especially by this day. It's not on the edge like it was when David first began to build.

The city has subsumed the mountain and surrounded the mountain in many ways. So, the first two phrases, I will return to Zion and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. What are the last two phrases? The mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain.

Four of the five lines in this verse are about the mountain, the holy mountain, God's dwelling place mountain. What's right in the middle? Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth. What is it not, as Zechariah speaks, and as Haggai prophesies, and as they feebly try to rebuild the temple, and they ask questions about this man-made fast.

Well, think about the indictment we just read in the second answer. It isn't until they respect Zion the way God does, and God is able to return and dwell in it, that they, as a city, emblematic of the nation and the people, but the capital city, will be called the city of truth. God's presence makes the city the city of truth.

Who's going to dwell in the city of truth? People who love the truth. Those are the only ones that are going to get in. They're a remnant.

It's going to go on from here. We're running out of time for tonight. But look at this.

Thus says the Lord of hosts in verse 4, Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand, because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets. You've got this contrast of old people with their staff in their hands sitting in the streets, enjoying the city.

Boys and girls playing in the streets, enjoying the city. And does this talk about the wide variety of chronological age in the millennial kingdom? Yes, it does. But what does it resonate with and speak of? If it's the city of truth, even those who have freshly come to the truth as boys and girls are going to play in the streets and enjoy the city because it's full of truth.

Those that are old men and women and have got a staff of authority in their hand, a staff of the sign of their age and their chronological attainments are going to sit in the city and soak up its ethos and its atmosphere because it's the city of truth. It's not just a prediction that there's going to be a lot of people there of varying ages. What did God just say? Because I am again on my holy mountain, this mountain that I love, and because my presence is there, the city is going to emanate and reek of truth.

And there's going to be old and young that are going to enjoy its streets because it's the city of truth, because God is in its environment. And that is a statement all by itself. So then, and this is going to continue here in chapter 8 all the way through verse 17.

It's a promise of restoration. Thus says the Lord of hosts in verse 6, If it's marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, will it also be marvelous in my eyes, says the Lord of hosts. And he's contrasting what he sees in the future millennial Jerusalem where there are these people who love the truth and they are the remnant who are in the city and in the land because they passed under the rod because that's their heart.

But he says, In the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days. Why does he have to say this remnant and these days? Because he's been speaking down the corridors of time. And he says, By the way, you people listening to Zachariah right now, if you think this is marvelous, do

you think that I think it's marvelous? It's not marvelous right now is the implication.

God says, This isn't happening now. It's going to happen. It's kind of like Balaam, I see him now but not near.

God sees the city of truth and himself on this mountain for which he is so jealous back in that millennial temple that Ezekiel spends eight chapters describing. But he says, You know, you think this is a marvelous prophecy. I don't because in the present it ain't happening.

And even when God's son, the Lord Jesus comes in the triumphal quote-unquote entry comes to that temple and looks around, he walks away in disappointment. It's not for now. We live a life of anticipation.

There are so many tensions of already not yet. We're already saved, but we are not ultimately saved. We're already righteous in God's sight.

We're not ultimately righteous. We're already citizens of heaven, but we're not yet in heaven enjoying that citizenship. And there is this already not yet aspect to our lives.

We already have the Spirit, but we don't have him in fullness. We have the presence of God the Father and God the Son. If we love his word and keep his commandments, Jesus says, the one who has my words and keeps them, he's the one that loves me.

I and my Father will come to him and make our home with him. And we enjoy this anticipatory foretaste of glory divine, but we wait for that wonderful time of fulfillment. Verse 7, thus says the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will save my people from the land of the east and from the land of the west.

Notice, they've already come back from the land of the north. But he says, there's going to be people distributed to the east and the west. Remember the vision of the chariots? And the black chariot and the white chariot went to the north, and the dappled chariot went to the south.

And we don't know where the red chariot went. And he doesn't say anything about the east and the west, because there's so much history in between. And if you pay attention to detail, you say, well hey, what about the red chariot? Hey, what about the east and the west? Well, there's a lot of history that is only tangentially alluded to here.

And it's a clue. You've got to think ahead. You've got to be anticipating.

I will bring them back, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be my people, and I will be their God. How? What's the last phrase in verse 8? In truth and righteousness.

How do you get that truth and righteousness? Go back to the second answer. Execute true justice. Show mercy and compassion, everyone to his brother.

Do not oppress the widow and fatherless. Do not oppress the alien and the poor. Do not plan

evil in your heart against your brother.

They will be my people, I will be their God, in truth and righteousness. Down through the ages, the people of God, especially the Old Testament ages in view here, those who value truth and righteousness, who execute justice and mercy and compassion, they are going to be dwelling in Jerusalem that is marked by the presence of God on Zion. Verse 9, thus says the Lord of hosts, Let your hands be strong, you who have been hearing in these days.

Notice how God always draws them back to the present time because he keeps alluding to the future. He says, here's what's going to happen in the future. Here's what you ought to be doing in these days.

He already said these days in verse 6. Now he says it again in verse 9. Let your hands be strong, you who have been hearing in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets who spoke in the day the foundation was laid for the house of the Lord of hosts that the temple might be built. For before these days there were no wages for man or any hire for beast. There was no peace from the enemy for whoever went out for, I said, all men, everyone against his neighbor.

Verse 11, but now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days, says the Lord of hosts. Once again, the plane is lifting off the runway. He said in these days, but as soon as he starts talking about the remnant, he's talking about the future remnant that is going to qualify to enter the land, that is going to qualify for inheritance, that is going to see Ezekiel's temple, that will put this one to absolute shame no matter how much Herod does to it.

The seed shall be prosperous, the vine shall give its fruit, the ground shall give her increase, the heaven shall give their due. I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all of these. It shall come to pass.

Notice, prophetic language, it shall come to pass. He doesn't say, you're about to see this. It shall come to pass, just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, which has been gone for 175, 200 years now.

House of Judah, house of Israel, I will save you and you shall be a blessing. Do not fear, let your hands be strong. He says, let your hands be strong now in the light of this promise I am going to fulfill for the remnant of which you can be a part later.

How many times, you remember when we used to talk about the triad of Christian virtues? What are they? Faith, hope, and love. We're going to be seeing it in Corinthians. Gotta get ready.

These three remain, faith, hope, and love. What do we say? Faith is the means. Love is the application, the outworking, the manifestation, how you treat the widow and the orphan and the alien and those that he mentions here.

And what is hope? Faith, love, what is hope? Hope is the motivation. It is the motivation. What is

he telling them right here? Let your hands be strong.

What's your motivation? The hope, the confident expectation, the recognition that God is going to fulfill these promises for the remnant. Let your hand be strong now. Keep your eye on God's fulfilled promises in that day.

It shall come to pass. Don't doubt it. Let your hands be strong now.

You're not going to see these fulfillments right now. Jerusalem, Judea, House of Israel, House of Judah, they didn't see these things happen anytime between Zechariah's day and the days of Jesus and 70 A.D. when the legions of Titus come in and everything is destroyed. They never saw these fulfillments.

But does it mean that anybody should be less diligent about having strong hands, about doing the task that is before you? If God says rebuild this sort of temporary temple here as an anticipation, as a foretaste, as a sign and seal, as a symbolic representation. I know there's a greater and better temple coming that God is going to actually dwell in. His glory will fill it like it did in the days of Solomon.

I'm going to build this temple now. It's a pale shadow, but I know the real one is coming. We are motivated by hope.

The confident realization that God's promises are going to be fulfilled and we are going to be the recipients of that wonderful benefit. That's what gets us up in the morning. That's what keeps us going when the going gets tough, when we're tired, when people are abrasive, when circumstances are oppressive, when things look dark.

It's dismal. It's ugly. There's not much happening here.

I look at the foundation and I weep. God says let your hands be strong. And what does He give them? My presence is coming.

My temple is coming. You can be a part of this remnant that is going to enjoy these things for ten centuries. He says to these people, we will enjoy them for eternity.

But it is all about in truth and righteousness. Where do we get the truth? We're doing it right now. We're looking at the word of God.

Thy word is truth. Sanctify them by thy truth. Thy word is truth.

We've got the truth. Where does the righteousness come from? What is righteousness? Faithful application of the truth. Righteousness by faith, what is that? I do what I do because I trust the word of God that gives me these great and precious promises.

We have a better covenant founded on new and better promises. And they are real to me and I do what I do in their light. In truth, in righteousness, let your hands be strong.

It's pretty clear. It's just a matter of using our chooser to do it. Well, we'll pick up here and see the remainder of these answers in the rest of chapter 8 when we pick up our study next time.

But let's close here. Let me just point out one other thing that caught my eye, had it marked in my Bible. Look at verse 19 of chapter 8. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth.

Remember I told you there were four fasts that they had invented? That's those four fasts. God says, I know what you're thinking when you ask me about the fifth, the fast of the fifth month. You're really asking about all of these.

And what does He say? These fasts, all of them were morning times. I'll give them to you in order. The fast of the tenth month actually came first.

That was commemorating Nebuchadnezzar's final siege of Jerusalem. It was in the tenth month of the ninth year of Zedekiah. All of these, by the way, all of these events are in Jeremiah 52.

So this one's in Jeremiah 52, 4 and 5. And because of Nebuchadnezzar coming in and that last siege where he came in and destroyed the city, that was in the tenth month, in the ninth year of Zedekiah. The fast of the fourth month, chronologically, comes second. That's Jeremiah 52, 6 and 7. In other words, the event it sorrowed over was next.

Jeremiah 52, 6 and 7. Babylonians break into Jerusalem after 16 months of siege that began in the ninth year. So when the siege began, they've got a morning fast for that. Tenth month, ninth year of Zedekiah.

When the Babylonians finally broke through, that was in the fourth month. In Zedekiah's eleventh year. So we're going to mourn that.

Mourn the beginning of the siege. Mourn when the siege finally succeeded and Nebuchadnezzar breaks in. Then a month later, that's the fifth month that we already talked about where he broke in, sacked the city, burned the city, destroyed the temple, took all the people captive.

And that's Jeremiah 52, 12 through 14. Then the final one, the fast of the seventh month that's mentioned here in verse 19. That's Jeremiah 41, verses 1 through 3. And this is the assassination of Gedaliah.

He was the governor of Judah. And nefarious types came in and assassinated him trying to come up with a political solution for Judah's problems. And so they had a fast for that.

But notice what God says in verse 19. The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth. Mourning all of these increasingly devastating things.

Look at what he says. Shall be joy and gladness and cheerful feasts. Every time you come to that, let's lift a glass and toast the beginning of the siege of the Babylonians.

Bring on another plate of chow and let's celebrate when Nebuchadnezzar broke through and sacked the city. Oh, let's celebrate when Gedaliah got murdered. God says in this verse that these occasions that they are so overwrought about are going to think back and raise a toast.

L'chaim for Nebuchadnezzar. L'chaim for Gedaliah. L'chaim for the destruction of the temple.

I mean if you can believe that. Look at it. Joy and gladness and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah.

Therefore, love, truth, and peace. How do you get from the subjectivity that woe is me, we lost everything to remember back there where God put us through that judgment? Best thing that ever happened to me. I have countless Christian testimonies.

People that you think, oh my gosh, that's a terrible disaster. You lost a loved one. You lost a child.

You lost limbs. You went through some terrible time of suffering. And you hear people say, best thing that ever happened to me.

Best thing that ever happened. That's what Judah is going to do in the millennial kingdom. Because they are going to recognize the truth of this prophecy of Zechariah.

And that this is what shook them free of their subjectivity and enabled them to see God on Zion and Jerusalem as the city of truth. Not the city where we've always lived. Any unbeliever can do that.

Oh yeah, my family's been here for generations. We've been on this farm for 273 years. That's not the reason to cry over losing it.

You lost God. You lost inheriting those wonderful opportunities and privileges associated with His presence. These fasts, this is why it's a four-pronged answer.

And I wanted to get that thought in before we conclude tonight so I didn't leave that thing half-baked. It's all in verse 19. And look at how it concludes.

Love, truth, and peace. Righteousness and peace. What does Jerusalem mean in the ancient Semitic roots of Hebrew? Yeru Shalem.

City of Shalom. It is the city of righteousness. Therefore, it is the city of peace.

That's why the old people can sit around with their sticks. That's why the kids can play in the streets without a care. Not going to get run over.

Not going to have somebody with an orange vest come on and yank them out of there and say, you can't play in the street. It's a city of peace. It's a city of righteousness.

Therefore, love, truth, and peace. Those four things are commingled. Anyway, we'll pick up our

study next time.

But that's the first half, at least, of chapter 8. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the wonderful, multiple levels of communication that You use through Your Holy Spirit to reach our souls, to impress on us the doctrine and reproof and correction and instruction in righteousness that we gain from all of these things that have been written for our instruction. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will bring them to our minds at the point that they are pertinent when we reflect, when we are reviewing our goals and our priorities and our values, when we're making our decisions, that we can be constantly looking ahead in the confident expectation of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the opportunity to accompany Him, to serve Him, and to reflect His glory before Your throne.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.