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### Rice Memorial MBC

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### **God Demands Justice**

Definitions in **bold** letters are from **Strong's** Exhaustive Concordance  
Other definitions are from **Webster's** Dictionary, 1828/1913 Edition  
or Roget's Thesaurus – **August 23, 2015**

**Worship with us** at **3201 Mary St** until we rebuild our sanctuary at 802 W. 15th,  
...We're just behind Kaufman's Lumber Company in Little Rock Arkansas...

## **Zechariah 7:8-14**

**Introduction:** Some Jews being **sent from** those who remained at **Babylon** to inquire of the priests and prophets at Jerusalem whether they were still bound to observe those **fasts** which had been appointed on occasion of the destruction of Jerusalem, and kept during the captivity, the prophet is commanded to take this opportunity of enforcing upon them the **weightier matters of the law, judgment and mercy**, that they might not incur such calamities as befell their fathers. He also intimates that in their former fasts they had regarded themselves more than God; and that they had rested too much on the performance of **external rites**, although the former prophets had largely insisted on the superior excellence of MORAL duties, Zech. 7:1-14. (Source: <http://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/acc/view.cgi?bk=zec&ch=7#1>)

**Zechariah 7:1-3**, And it came to pass in the **fourth** year of king **Darius**, that the word of the Lord came unto **Zechariah** in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu; When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to **pray** before the Lord, And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the Lord of hosts, and to the prophets, saying,  
Should I **weep** in the **fifth month**, separating myself, as I **have done** these so many years?

**NOTE:** And it came to pass, in the fourth year of **King Darius**,... Near two years AFTER the foundation of the temple was laid, Haggai 2:10 and near two years BEFORE it was finished, Ezra 6:15 when the work was going forward, and there was a great deal of reason to believe it would be completed:

that the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, in the fourth day of the ninth **month, even in Chisleu:** which answers to part of our October, and part of November. (Source: <http://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/geb/view.cgi?bk=zec&ch=7#1>)

**NOTE:** The fifth day of the **fifth month**, remarkably, had been the **anniversary** of a number of **disasters** in Israel: **1.** The decision of God not to allow the fathers to enter the promised land. **2.** The destruction of the first temple. **3.** The destruction of the second temple. **4.** The conquest of the city of Bother in the time of Bar-Cochba. **5.** The destruction of Jerusalem. Now the most important thing about all of these fasts was that **God** had **neither commanded nor authorized** ANY one of them! Only ONE DAY in the year, the Day of Atonement, had God commanded His people to **fast**;

yet they had added all these others! In the times of the Pharisees, that class of bigots even fasted "twice in the week?" (Luke 18:12).

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=37&ch=7>)

**Zechariah 7:4-7**, Then came the **word** of the Lord of hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto ALL the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye **fasted** and **mourned** in the **fifth** and **seventh** month, even those **seventy years**, did ye at all fast unto ME, even TO ME? And when ye did **eat**, and when ye did **drink**, did **not** ye **EAT** for **yourselves**, and **DRINK** for **yourselves**? Should ye not **hear** the words which the Lord hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in **prosperity**, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?

**NOTE:** Whereas this inquiry had come from a people's delegation at Bethel, the message of Zechariah was directed not only to all the people, but particularly also to those priests who had invented the **unauthorized fasts** and **led** the people in the **perversion** of the worship of God. Through them, the message applies to all who would come afterward, even down to the present time. What people **invent** for **themselves**, by way of religious ordinances and devices, is **worthless**. Such are not "unto the Lord." They, in fact, have nothing to do with God. "The answer to the question here is no." The fasts were worthless, not because God disapproved of fasting in principle, but because these particular fasts were not related to God's commandments.

"**In the seventh month ...**" This was the fast commemorating the **murder** of Gedaliah, and was one of several such fasts. See chapter introduction. That event had occurred, "in 587 B.C., just seventy years ago, when the greater part of the remnant of the Jews, contrary to the **prophet's warning**, **fled** into Egypt to **escape punishment** for the crime."

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=37&ch=7>)

**Zechariah 7:8-10**, And the **word** of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute **TRUE judgment (JUSTICE)**, and **shew mercy** and **compassions** every man to his **brother**: And oppress NOT the **WIDOW**, nor the **fatherless**, the **stranger**, nor the **POOR**; and let none of you **imagine** evil against **his brother** in your **heart (mind)**.

**NOTE:** Instead of quoting the former prophets, Zechariah gives the substance of their exhortations, as renewed to himself. **Thus spake the Lord** - that is, through the former prophets, for he goes on to speak of their rejection in the past. "Execute **true judgment**." He retains the words of Ezekiel. The injunction itself runs throughout the prophets. "**Shew mercy**" (as Isaiah 1:17, Isaiah 1:23; Isaiah 58:6-7; Jeremiah 7:5; Ezekiel 18:8; Hosea 12:6, etc.), that is, **tender LOVE, to ALL**; compassion, to the unhappy. Omit no act of love, God so loves the loving. Lap.: "Like Paul to the Romans, Romans 13:9, he names only the **duties** to the neighbor, but understands what relates to God. For the love of our neighbor presupposes the **LOVE of God**, from which it springs." Jerome: "After strictness of **justice**, let **mercy** to all follow, and specially to **brethren**, of the same Blood and of **ONE FAITH**. ...

**Isaiah 1:17**, LEARN to **DO well**; seek **judgment** (justice), relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

**Romans 13:8-10**, Owe no man any thing, but to **LOVE one another**: for he that LOVETH another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not **kill (be a murderer)**, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh **no ill** to his neighbour: therefore **love** is the **fulfilling of the law**.

**John 13:34**, A NEW commandment I give unto you, that ye **LOVE one another**; AS (like) **I have LOVED you**, that ye also **LOVE** one another.

**And oppress not** - He had commanded positive acts of LOVE; he now forbids every sort of UNLOVE. "He that oppresseth the poor," Solomon had said, "reproacheth his Maker. The widow, the orphan, the stranger, the afflicted" Proverbs 24:31, are, throughout the law, the special objects of God's care. This was the condition which God made by Jeremiah; "If ye thoroughly **amend your ways and your doings**, if ye thoroughly execute Judgment (JUSTICE) between a man and his neighbor; if ye oppress not the stranger the fatherless and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt, then will I cause you to dwell in this, place" Jeremiah 7:5-7. It was on the **breach** (breaking) of the **covenant** to set their brethren free in the year of release, that God said; "I proclaim a liberty for you to the sword, to the pestilence and to the famine, and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth" Jer. 34:17. **And let none of you imagine** - that is, "**devise**, as, by Micah, God retorted the evil upon them. They "devised evil on their beds; therefore, behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks" Micah 2:1, Micah 2:3. (Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb/view.cgi?bk=zec&ch=7#1>)

**Micah 2:1-3**, 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. And they covet fields, and **take them** by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they **oppress** a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, against this family do I **devise an evil**, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil.

**Zechariah 7:11**, *But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should NOT HEAR.*

**Hear defined 8085, to hear intelligently (often with implication of attention, obedience), understand.**

**NOTE:** But they gave a backsliding shoulder - Like a restive (obstinate in refusing to move forward; stubborn; drawing back) animal, which would not endure the yoke, dull and stupid as the beasts: as Hosea says, "Israel **slideth back** like a **backsliding heifer**" Hos. 4:16. Nehemiah confesses the same; "they gave a backsliding shoulder and hardened their neck and would not hear" Neh. 9:29.

**And made heavy their ears** - Fulfilling in themselves what God foretold to Isaiah would be the result of his preaching, "make their ears heavy." The heart, which will not hearken, becomes duller by the outward hearing, as Paul says, "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected" Hebrews 6:7-8.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb/view.cgi?bk=zec&ch=7#1>)

**Isaiah 6:8-10**, Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall **I send**, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, **HEAR** ye indeed, but **understand not**; and **SEE** ye indeed, but **perceive not**. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and **understand** with their heart, and **convert**, and **be healed**.

**Matthew 13:15-16**, For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes **they** have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should **understand** with their **heart**

**(MIND)**, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they **SEE** and your ears, for they **HEAR**.

**Zechariah 7:12**, *Yea, they made their hearts (will, MIND) as an adamant stone (a gem, probably the diamond), lest they should HEAR (understand) the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath SENT in his SPIRIT by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts.*

**NOTE:** Harder than **adamant** - The **stone**, whatever it be, was hard enough to cut ineffaceable characters: it was harder than flint. It would cut rocks; it could not be graven itself, or receive the characters of God.

This is the last sin, obduracy, persevering impenitence, which “resisted the Holy Spirit” Acts 7:51. and “did despite to the Spirit of grace” Hebrews 10:29. Not through infirmity, but of set purpose, they hardened themselves, lest “they should convert” Isaiah 6:10 and be healed. They feared to trust themselves to God’s word, lest He should convert them by it. **Lest they should hear the law and the words which the Lord God sent by His Spirit by the hand of the former prophets** - The Holy Spirit was the chief agent; “by His Spirit;” the inspired prophets were His instruments; by the hand of. Nehemiah confesses the same to God: “Thou didst protest to them by Thy Spirit by the hand of Thy prophets” Nehemiah 9:30. Moses was one of the greatest prophets. The law then may be included, either as delivered by Moses, or as being continually enforced by all the prophets. Observe the gradations: **(1)** The words of God are not heard. **(2)** The restive shoulder is shown; people turn away, when God, by the inner motions of His Spirit or by lesser chastisements, would bring them to the yoke of obedience. Osorius: “They **would not bear** the burden of the law, whereas they willingly bore that most heavy weight of their sins.” **(3)** Obduracy. Osorius: “Their adamantine heart could be softened neither by promises nor threats.” Therefore nothing remained but the great wrath, which they had treasured to themselves against the **day of wrath**. And so Zechariah returns to that, wherewith his **message** and **visions** of future mercy began, the great wrath which fell upon their fathers Zechariah 1:7.

Osorius: “I sought not, He says, for your tears; I enjoined (commanded) not bitterness of sorrow; but what, had they been done, the calamity, for which those tears were meet, had never befallen you. What was it which I admonished you formerly by the former prophets to recall you FROM SIN? What I bid you by Zechariah now. This I preach, admonish, testify, inculcate (teach and enforce by frequent repetitions) upon you.”  
(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb/view.cgi?bk=zec&ch=7#1>)

**Jeremiah 7:25-26**, Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all **my servants** the **prophets**, daily **rising up early** and **sending them**: Yet they hearkened NOT unto me, nor inclined their ear, but **HARDENED** their **NECK**: they did worse than their fathers.

**Jeremiah 7:28-31**, But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that **obeyeth NOT** the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth. Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath **rejected** and **forsaken** the **generation** of **his wrath**. For the children of Judah have **DONE EVIL** in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the **house (temple)** which is called by my name, to **pollute it**. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to **BURN** their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them **NOT**, neither came it into my heart.

**Zechariah 7:13**, *Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would **not** hear, saith the Lord of hosts:*

**NOTE:** **And it came to pass** - that is, this which God had said, "As He cried and they heard not, so shall they cry and I will not hear, saith the Lord of hosts." God had often said this. **"It shall be too late to cry for mercy, when it is the time of justice."** So Wisdom had said by Solomon; "then, that is, when distress and anguish cometh upon them, they shall call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, and they shall not find Me" Proverbs 1:27-28. So by Isaiah, "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of bloods" Isaiah 1:15. So by Hosea, Hosea 5:6, by Micah, Micah 3:4, by Jeremiah Jeremiah 11:14; Jeremiah 14:12. It was one message which was verified in every day of chastisement, **"there will be a too late;" not a final "too late,"** until the **end of ends comes**, but a "too late" for them, a "too late" to avert that particular judgment of God, whereby the sinner's earthly trial and future were changed permanently. (Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/brn/view.cgi?bk=zec&ch=7#1>)

**Isaiah 55:6**, SEEK ye the Lord while he may be **found (deliver)**, **call ye** upon him while he is **near (allied [friendly])**...

**Jeremiah 11:9-11, 14**, And the LORD said unto me, A **conspiracy** is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They are **turned back** to **the iniquities of their forefathers**, which REFUSED to hear MY WORDS; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have **broken my covenant** which I made with their fathers. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. ...Therefore PRAY NOT thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or **prayer for them:** for **I will not hear them in the time** that they cry unto me for their trouble.

**Zechariah 7:14**, *But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.*

**NOTE:** "But **I will scatter** them with a whirlwind among all the nations which they have not known. So that all the land was desolate after them..."

Here again we have a change of tense: "I will scatter ... the land was desolate after them"; but there is a discernible reason for it. The prophecy, "I will scatter ... etc." **had just been fulfilled** in the **Babylonian captivity** and in the **Assyrian captivity** preceding it; but this was by no means to be the END of the "scattering of Israel," which would occur AGAIN after their **final rejection** of the **Messiah**, the destruction of their temple, their capital, their political entity, and the dispersion of the Jewish population all over the world throughout history; hence, the use of the **future tense** here. The immediate switch to the past tense refers to the desolation and destruction that had already accompanied the scatterings already accomplished. "What had happened in the past was a sign of what WOULD HAPPEN to them in the FUTURE." Zechariah doubtless expected the returnees to draw a conclusion from all of this, which Gill stated thus:

"Therefore, those who **mourned** the **just punishments** of God (by keeping all those **fast days**) had best LEAVE OFF such meaningless ceremonies and themselves heed the teaching of the **former prophets.**"

This concludes the second of the six statements made by Zechariah in response to the inquiry of the delegation from Bethel.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=zec&ch=7#1>)

**Matthew 27:24-25**, When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, **HIS BLOOD** **be on us**, and on our children.