

Zechariah 7-8 – 30 July 2026

“Calling All Hearts Out Of Dead Religion”

Introduction

*Zechariah is the 2nd of 3 post-exilic prophets, prophesying at the same time as Haggai

*Zec 1-6 begins with a call for the people to *return to Him* & accept *the unstoppable nature of God's plan*

*He's described to them in 8 visions the details of His unfolding, unstoppable plan to redeem humanity

*Now He continues His call to them by showing them just how to *return to Him*

Today, we'll see 4 steps that will enable anyone to come out from dead religion or self-effort

#1 – Focus on a right heart or ritual is hollow (7:1-7)

Read 7:1-3

1. They returned to rebuild in 536 BC but stayed stagnant until 520 BC when Haggai & Zechariah stirred them to build

- a. Now it's 518 BC – Temple is almost ready for its dedication
 - b. Bethel's men believe they're starting anew
2. These are two honorable men wanting to know the mind of the Lord – they're to be commended
3. Law only instituted 1 fast (Day of Atonement) – but since Temple gone Israel instituted 4 more
 - a. Siege Starts (10-10-588BC) – II Kin 25:1
 - b. Wall Breached (4-9-586BC) – II Kin 25:3-4
 - c. Temple Burned (5-9-586BC) – II Kin 25:8-9
 - d. Gedaliah Murder (7-3-586BC) – Jer 41:1
4. “These many years” is specifically Jeremiah's 70 years of punishment (Read Jer 25:11)
 - a. Daniel thought it was ending *in his day* (537 BC), he was right
 - b. It's *also* ending in Zechariah's day (518 BC)
 - c. Daniel's is the end of *servitude* to Babylon & Zechariah's is the end of land's *desolation*
5. Consider the fast and the 70-year prophecy
 - a. Daniel/Servitude: 605 (Dan 1)–537 (Dan 9)

- b. Siege Starts/Land: 10-10-588 (II Kin 25:1)–9-4-518 (Zec 7)
 - c. Capture/Land: 586 (II Kin 25)–516 (Ezra 6)
6. All this to say that the 70 years is ending and Israel stands at a crossroads

Read 7:4-7

1. This question was from the men of Bethel, but the response is for ‘all the people of the land’
 - a. Bethel was honorable but the population still had a heart problem that needs dealt with
2. Look at the progression of these 3 verses
 - a. Vs 5 – When you’re doing religious ritual – is it really for the Lord (no, not from the heart)
 - b. Vs 6 – When you’re ***not*** doing religious ritual – is it really for the Lord (no)
 - c. Vs 7 – This is the same thing God’s always asked of you (see Jer 17:24-27)
3. God doesn’t care about our rituals if we don’t have the right heart behind it
 - a. This has ***always been*** the case

#2 – Make meaningful character changes (7:8-14)

Read 7:8-10

1. This sounds strikingly like (Read) Mic 6:8
2. What matters is the attitude of the heart, not the actions of the hands
3. Don't have a heart that would take advantage of those that have suffered loss of their protection
 - a. Widow (lost spouse), orphan (lost parents), migrant (lost country), poor (lost their finance)
 - b. How do you react when you see someone down or experiencing loss?
 - c. When you're in a place of authority, do you give unbiased justice?

Read 7:11-12

1. Have you had a Christian giving you God's Word say, 'God is trying to get your attention'
 - a. If it's God's Word, then YES, He is!
 - b. God's Spirit was speaking thru the prophets
2. Don't ***pull away*** when we hear from God
 - a. We're more mature today, we don't pull away, we simply act like we never heard Him

3. To hear God's Word is to be ready to turn the direction of any part of our life

Read 7:13-14

1. What got them punished by God thru Babylon was the refusal of their heart to turn to God
2. Go back to the question: should we stop fasting
 - a. Well...have they changed their heart?
 - b. Do they mourn *in the heart* for their sin?

#3 – Ask for Jesus' power in your midst (8:1-17)

Read 8:1-2

1. What would steal Israel's affections away from Him brings Him great fury and wrath
2. As a rightfully jealous husband for his wife

Read 8:3

1. It's when God returns that Jerusalem can be called the City of Truth & the Holy Mountain
 - a. The following vss make it impossible to say this of when Jesus came into Jerusalem

- b. This is speaking of what's yet to come
- c. Again, this proves that God isn't done with Israel yet (notice vs 7 says 'My people')

Read 8:4-5

- 1. The days of long life and safety are coming
- 2. More than needing them to go anywhere, the streets are used for playing – speaks of rest

Read 8:6

- 1. Read Jer 32:17 – You're the Creator, nothing is too difficult for You
- 2. Though it's too hard for every man combined, it's not for God

Read 8:7-8

- 1. Again, this is happening now in 20th century
 - a. In Zec's time, they're coming back from the scattering to the east, but not the east *and* west
- 2. Notice again the goal; restored relationship
 - a. It's not compliance or forced slavery
 - b. Not a contractual life, but a communal life

Read 8:9-13

1. Let your hands ***be strong*** and do the work of the Lord, but why?
 - a. B/c now your work is favored by God
 - b. Before your work was being stopped by God
2. If God is against us, who can be for us?
 - a. But if God is for us, who can be against us?
 - b. All that matters is that we're act for God's will and not against it, then we'll prosper

Read 8:14-17

1. ***Don't fear***, God's in this cause, do it
2. Remember what He's calling them to be strong not fearing to do; heart issues, character change

#4 – Expect joy & abundance to come (8:18-23)

Read 8:18-19

1. These 4 fasts days were ***not*** prescribed in the Law, but they were a direct result of their sins

- a. Changing fast days into days of joy speaks directly to how God will remove Israel's sins
- b. Today the Jews still observe all 4 fasts
- 2. Each time they observe these fasts, their minds should be drawn to Zechariah's call to set your heart on obedience and not only to be set on ritual
- 3. Should Jews celebrate them today?
 - a. If they do, it should be in commemoration with sincere repentance for their sins
 - b. If they don't, it should be in anticipation of Jesus' return to turn them from sadness to joy

Read 8:20-22

- 1. This vast promise of many nations coming to worship in Jerusalem may have seemed crazy in these 'days of small things' for Zechariah
- 2. This speaks of the 1,000-year Kingdom coming
 - a. The Jewish Son of David will be its ruler
 - b. The Jewish city Jerusalem is its capital
 - c. But it's always been meant for *all people*

Read 8:23

1. Here in the Church Age, the Times of the Gentiles, we are provoking unbelieving Israel to come to Jesus for salvation (Read Rom 11:11)
 - a. It's b/c of them seeing Christ in us (Col 1:27)
 - b. As the Kingdom Age starts, it'll be saved Israel that'll provoke the Gentiles to believe

Conclusion

Whether for yourself or your friends, this is God's plan to pull you out of dead religion & self-works

- 1. Focus on a right heart or the ritual is hollow**
 - a. Internal changes are always the priority
- 2. Make meaningful character changes**
 - a. Live for truth, justice and service
- 3. Ask for Jesus' power in your midst**
 - a. Without God's power, we're helpless
- 4. Expect joy and abundance to come**
 - a. We can endure the hardness of this life for what is to come