

Zechariah 14 – Fasting for Sin: Seeking Forgiveness

Zechariah - 8
Dr. Leon L. Sanders

Zechariah's Answer Outlined

Chapter Seven

- Question of Fastings
 - Comes to Temple
- Negative Answer
 - Decalogue - God Relationship
 - Decalogue - Man Relationship

Chapter Eight

- The Answer - Rest in God
 - True faith promotes right relationship with God
 - True faith promotes right relationship with others
- True faith unites all believers
 - True leadership - Serving

Fastings – What Are They?

- Jews *added* celebrations, special observances (fasting) to festivals God proscribed, usually not in the bible
 - Fourth Month - Destruction of Jerusalem's walls
 - Fifth Month - Destruction of the Temple
 - Seventh Month - Murder of Gedaliah by Jews
 - Tenth Month - Beginning of Babylonian siege
- Fastings were *ceremonial*, daylight hours only (Za 6:16-20)

Historical Background

- The Temple under construction for two years
- Take another two years to complete, Temple already acknowledged as an authority of Jewish faith beside rabbinic Pharisaism {Only surviving form today}
- Envoy from Babylon {Persia} seeking guidance on correct forms and rituals, *not on faith*

Harkens Back to First Vision

- Lord discusses His love and zealousness for Jerusalem
 - This was His stated goal in the first vision
 - This the foundation on which all else is built - His will
- God's plans for Jerusalem and His people based on His faithfulness - not their piety {Works}
 - They fasted for self {pre-exile, exile, now} (Lk 58:1-9)

Prophecy Applies to the Future

- Christ looks to Millennial Kingdom {Present Tense}
 - His people are not ready - Still live in the flesh {Works}
 - Exemplified by Christ cleansing the Temple
 - Beginning of Ministry (Lk 2:13-17)
 - End of Ministry (Lk 19:45-48)
 - Christ weeping over Jerusalem - Rejection of Messiah (Lk 19:41-44)
 - First He must die for sin - rise again for life (Lk 24:13-15)

Christ Dwells in Glory

- Christ will dwell in His glory on Mt Zion in Jerusalem
 - He gave three disciples a small display of His glory before His crucifixion (Peter, James, John) 06.9.18
 - No one understood this aspect of His plan because they did not exegete the Scriptures, they eisegeted His word
- Christians today allow their worldview to dictate their doctrines rather than God's word inform their beliefs

People Live with Long Lives

- Those who enter the Millennial Kingdom and those born in this period live long lives - in the flesh 06.65.20.25
 - People will still sin - In the flesh
 - This will be a time of prosperity
 - People will seek God and He will answer them directly
 - Sinners will have no peace - "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" 06.5.9

Christ Speaks in Contrasts

- Christ contrasts:
 - Their fear of death and slavery in exile with their peace and safety under His care in the Millennial Kingdom
 - Their exile and little mercy with the grace He pours on them, calling them out of the nations (Future)
- Christ speaks to strengthen His people who saw the Temple foundation laid - Complete the Temple

He Adjures Them - Live by Faith

- When the people live by faith in Him their fruit will be evident in their relationships with everyone (Isa 5:18-20)
 - Speak truth - Clear conscience
 - True judgments - True peace
 - Do not devise evil in their hearts - Do Not Covet
 - Despise false oaths - Worship false gods (Self)
- God *hates* those who hate righteousness (Lost)

Jews Will Lead by Serving

- Peoples from the many nations {sheep} who enter the Millennial Kingdom will seek the Jews to lead them to Jerusalem that they might learn of God (Isa 25:11-46)
 - They will be nation of priests as promised-Mount Horeb (Isa 14:4)
 - They will not seek to dominate nations as they do now
 - They will follow Christ's example - lead by service (Isa 11:1-20)

Now God Addresses the Fasts

- He simply says that the times of fasting shall turn into times of joy and happiness - *cheerful feasts*
 - They must pursue truth and peace
- Implies that their current practice did not produce love and peace but division and strife (Isa 4:14)
 - Sin is *always* disruptive though it *promises* unity, peace

Did God Answer Their Question?

- They wanted a simple "yes - no" answer (Jc 4 2:20-23)
 - They sought to justify their sin, as did their fathers
 - They sought to please God in the flesh
 - They strengthened the flesh, not their faith
 - They produced a *self-made religion* {Talmudic traditions}
 - They could not control their flesh - Rejects God
 - They destroyed their hope, Messiah, by fleshly works

God's Answer - Live by Faith

- God's answer - live by faith which comes only from Him, *new nature*, not in their old nature (2Co 5:17)
- James put this succinctly as one of the three definitions of sin in the New Testament
- "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (Jc 4:17-KJV)

They Will Have the Promise (Jc 11:39)

- God's promises via Zechariah could not be achieved until Christ died and rose (Jc 3:21-26; Hc 3:1-17)
 - God did not set them up to fail - Salvation by faith (Jc 3:16-17)
 - Their belief in Him would save them (Abraham) (Jc 4:3)
 - Christ's sacrifice would stretch back, covering them
- When resurrected they will obtain *new covenant (nature)* (Jc 31:31-34)

We Have the Promise Today (Ro. 8:9-11)

- Christians have the promise the Jews did not due to their unbelief (Ro. 11:7-11)
- Yet, like them, many miss the truth seeking to live by works of the flesh: dos and don'ts strengthening the flesh resulting in violence, lack of peace
- Many live their way rather than by faith in Christ

Maturing in Christ

- How to live apart from rules:
 - "If the Lord wills..." should govern our behavior (1 Co. 4:19)
 - Living by our goals is sinful arrogance against the Lord
- We know what is right to do because:
 - Indwelling Holy Spirit
 - Bible

Doing Our Good is Sin

- Thus, when we refuse to:
 - Do the good the Bible instructs
 - Ignore the guidance of the Holy Spirit
 - Do not pray for God's will to be done
- We willfully sin
 - God may direct you to do one thing but not another
 - Refusal to follow God is sin for YOU, not another

Without Faith It is Impossible (He 11:6)

- The envoy made a first step inquiring of God
 - Must believe that God exists
 - That God answers those who seek Him
- God corrected their sin
- God showed them the future He would fulfill through their posterity in Millennial Kingdom (Vision) (Zc 19:10)

Draw Near to God (Is 4:5)

- They needed to draw near to God
 - They had to recognize their sin and repent
 - They had to reject the confusion of flesh with faith
 - They had to understand they could not please God (He 11:6)
- Unless they were totally dependent on the Lord they would fail; difference between works and faith (Is 40:31)

These People Failed as We Do

- History details the failure of the Jews to live by faith
 - They lived by works - They died by works
 - They rejected Messiah - He rejected them, for a time
- Yet, God has come to us as His *first fruits* - Church
 - We are not above the same failures
 - Christendom has left Christ for sin - Will You? (He 2:4-5, 3:14-20)