

God's Redirect in Inquiry

Zechariah

Sermon 9

Zechariah 7:1 – 14

Nutshell: It is good to ask God questions. Nowadays, He answers by the Bible. As before, His answers necessitate our own self-inquiry.

Vision Outline:

A chiasm. Compare Vision 1 with 8, 2 with 7, and 3 with 6. Visions 4 and 5 are the focus.

Vision 1, 1:7-17. Vis 2, 1:18-21. Vis 3, 2:1-13. Vis 4, 3:1-10. Vis 5, 4:1-14. Vis 6, 5:1-4. Vis 7, 5:5-11. Vis 8, 6:1-8.

Vision 1: The Son's HORSEMEN: the pagans **rest** smugly. God: I'll be with Israel and judge/convert the pagans.

Vision 2: God sends 4 builders to **BRING DOWN** the 4 pagan horns that scatter God's people.

Vision 3: The Son **goes out** to measure Jerusalem for her coming expansion. Pagans to be judged.

Vision 4: God justifies His priest, rebuking Satan. God commissions Zechariah, promising Messiah.

Vision 5: God sanctifies (anoints) His ruler by His Spirit. Worship renewed = pagans' judgment.

Vision 6: A scroll **goes out** to 'measure' the ungodly in Israel.

Vision 7: Harlot church **THROWN DOWN**, to be sent away.

Vision 8: The Son's HORSEMEN go forth to give God's Spirit **rest** (judge or convert (2:11) the pagans.)

Kid-speak: In Zechariah, God showed Zechariah what He would do by showing him eight _ ↑

I. An Occasion for God to Speak, v 1 – 3

A. God had taken the initiative in the *previous* scenario, 6:9-15

1. Ordering golden crowns for Joshua the high priest, made from gold brought back from Babylon
2. Christ, the coming Priest-King, would be the true Temple builder, we being stones, 1 Pet 2:5

B. The date and occasion of this Word from God, v 1

1. Now the initiative of a question prompts a word from God
2. God is a multi-situational talker. Listen to Him whenever and from wherever He speaks.

C. The messengers seeking an answer from God

1. From Bethel, the old idolatrous center, now seeking the true God again
2. Shar-etsar and Regem-melech (a title?) & co.

D. The manner of their inquiry: **pleading**, v 2

1. A word meaning to be rubbed or worn (76x), used almost exclusively of pain and sickness
2. How deep do your prayers go? Ps 119:20, 40, 131, 174
3. Can any seeking of God be true without involving the whole heart? Deut 4:29; Ps 119:2, 10, 145

Kid-speak: Some people came 10 miles to ask God a question. Does God have time for our questions? Yes! Is He smart enough to put everybody's answer in the Bible now? Sure! That's why He tells us to learn it like the back of our hands. And whenever we have a question, it makes us learn the Bible better.

E. The intermediaries for their inquiry: the priests (Mal 2:7, frontline) and prophets (levee), v 3

1. The priests were to be teachers, Lev 10:11
2. A prophet answered them

F. Their question:

1. Whether to continue to lament in the 5th month, v 3
2. Apparently for the Temple's burning, Jer 52:12-14

Kid-speak: The people with the question wanted to know if they should keep having their sad ceremony. What do you think God's going to tell them?

II. An Immediate Counter-Question About the State of the Inquirers, v 4-6

A. Discouraging our inquires? No! *Encouraging* them! They were answered!

1. They will be specifically and fully answered in 8:19
2. They had indeed asked well!

B. A universal answer, to *all* of Israel, not just Bethel. Good thing they asked!

C. God: Were your annual fasts these last 70 years truly God-centered?

1. They only asked about the 5th-month. God included their 7th month fast.
2. Maybe they had already decided to continue (or discontinue?) the 7th month fast.
3. The 7th-month coincided with Gedaliah's murder and the Jews' subsequent dispersal, Jer 41

D. God: Compare your fasting to your eating. Who has the eating been for?

1. That's a reliable guide to whom the fasting had been for
2. But, again, was God discouraging their inquiry? Far from it!

Kid-speak: God asked the men if they cared about Him the rest of the time as much as they did in their ceremony. Good question, huh?

3. This is a fairly transportable answer, good for all folks at any time, Job 35:10-11
 - a. How God-centered/ focused are any of us *at our best*?
 - b. Putting all seeking of God in the same paltry basket? Even farther from it!
 - c. Rather, indicating that those not *ardently* seeking God aren't even on the radar
 - d. If the best seekers are still tainted/ weighted, how can the puny seekers hope to rise above the weight *at all*?

Kid-speak: So was God saying they *shouldn't* do their ceremony anymore? No! He was just telling them to make sure that their *whole lives* showed that they cared about God.

E. More specifically, is God suggesting that fasting is dumb, optional, or unnecessary?

1. No! Jesus clearly said that His disciples in this age would fast, Matt 9:15
2. Fasting was an established, regular practice, Matt 6:16 ("when," not "if"), to be continued by us

Kid-speak: The men with the question had been going without food for God. Was God OK with that? Yes! Are we supposed to go without food for God? Yes! It's called fasting, even though it makes you go slow.

- ★ 3. There are some things you *just can't learn* in your head alone. Fasting is a place where mere agreement with the truth comes utterly apart.
 - a. I simply don't know the weakness of my flesh until I fast
 - b. Is it enough to simply *agree* that my flesh is weak? **Nope**. Need to see/ feel it. Even if in continual unsuccessful fasting. (Don't be arrogant. "If I can't go a whole day, then pshaw!")

III. A Comparison to Israel's Former Situation, v 7-14

A. God similarly confronted Israel through the former prophets, v 7

1. When Jerusalem was roundly at peace. *Overflowing* peace, unto and beyond Jerusalem's borders.
 - a. Negeb, "parched," of the desert region south of Judah
 - b. Shephelah, "low," of the lowlands in the eastern part of Judah (originally of Dan)
2. But she endangered her peace through slackness towards God and injustice to men ↓

Kid-speak: Remember God kicking the Jews out of Jerusalem (He used Babylon)? Before that, things were good in Israel. But God kept telling them things to fix so they wouldn't have to be kicked out. Is God telling *us* things to fix? Yup. It's because of how we are. We need real fixing.

B. An adjoining Word, v 8

C. God had given former Israel 4 correctives, v 9-10

1. Judge judgments of truth, v 9. Think of how many of our decisions display our sense of justice.
2. Make sure kindness and compassions govern each of your relationships. Do we impose unnecessary hardships in our decisions?
3. Don't let your decisions be the cause of oppression to the disadvantaged, v 10. Buying Nike?
4. Don't let evil plans against anyone arise in your hearts. How often do you have unkind thoughts towards others?
5. God will reinforce these areas in His fuller answer in 8:16-17
6. Where are all these correctives based? In the '2nd Table' of the Law.
7. **Fellowman** is the arena in which our spirits are infallibly see- if we will but see

Kid-speak: What kind of things had God told Israel to fix before? Well, they tended to lie a little bit when it made things better for them. They cared too much for themselves, and it made them hard on other people. They did things that hurt poor people. They fought with each other. Are those things we probably need to fix too?

D. Former Israel's 4-fold response, v 11-12

1. Listening was not a real consideration
2. The harder the prophets pressed, the more firmly the people pulled away
3. They erected permanent "Do Not Enter" signs at their ears against God's words
4. They strengthened their souls such that the signs wouldn't come down
5. But doubtless objecting, "Hey I'm doing all the Temple stuff." OR "I'm nice!"

Kid-speak: What did old Israel do with all the stuff God said to fix? They said, "Yeah, right!" Meaning, "No way." "I'm already doing all that!"

E. God broke forth in righteous anger, v 12

1. Many earlier judgments, including famine, Jer 14:1
2. Culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and deportation of the populace

F. Former Israel's response to God's anger, v 13

1. They finally called on Him, but their recompense was already in motion
2. No late-breaking rescue available. Their enduring adamant hearts showed through, Jer 40-44.

3. When God calls to us and we don't answer, we're building a cage for ourselves
 - a. We're training ourselves in how to ignore God
 - b. Then, when disaster strikes, we think we can undo all that ignorance in 1 day, Prov 1:25-26
 - c. That's why God laughs. "Are you kidding? Pretend that you're sincere when you have steeped yourself in insincerity? No. Only the trial can untrain/ retrain you now."

Kid-speak: If we keep not listening to God, then we have a big emergency and call out to God- "Please, God, I need Your help now!"- is there any way we can learn all that stuff we *didn't* listen to all at once? Nope. Only way to learn it now? In the frying pan of the trouble.

G. Where they ended up, v 14

1. Blown on God's hurricane breath to every other nation (By Assyria, then Babylon)
2. The land they left behind (as Zechariah, etc. found it)
 - a. A shock of devastation
 - b. Not even passable
 - c. Putting the delightful land into a coma
 - d. Us: Look at the devastated souls we've left in our wake
3. The Land was a picture of Eden. God returned His favor on a people in the Land.
 - a. The Captivity was a picture of getting bounced from Eden
 - b. Does it really make sense that God would just give us perpetual redos?
 - c. What are consequences for if they never stick?
 - d. The fact that they DO indeed stick is seen in the Cross
 - i. There, the sins of the elect stuck to Christ
 - ii. Can the rest of men's sins simply remain unstuck?
 - iii. This is where the Cross is not just redemption, but judgment
4. This is what God was telling all Israel
 - a. If you don't give *everything* to your **listening** to Me, you will easily end up where your predecessors did
 - b. History is not cyclical (though similar events occur). There is an ending point. Death is when the cards in your hand get played, and that's it. Earthly consequences are just a *picture* (and a very good one) of that.

Kid-speak: Why did God tell the people in Zechariah's day about what happened to Israel before? Because the same thing would happen to them if they weren't careful! Could the same thing happen to *us* too? You bet!

Wrap-up: Asking God questions. We see that it's when we're *on track* that He puts it to us a little harder. Think of all of Jesus' redirects to questions. He IS giving the answer we *need*.

Questions of worship cannot be answered without reference to our own enactments of judgment. Look at 8:23. When we use neighbor-love to correct our love of God, what great promise God gives of His working in/among/through us!