

## “When True Piety is Missing”

Zechariah 7:1-14  
A Call to Repentance

Where true piety is missing, all is amiss, and there is only one remedy!

### 1. The Occasion: A Religious Question – and what it revealed. vv. 1-3

#### (1) A Delegation from Bethel “Now the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech and their men to entreat the favor of the LORD...”

- The temple was at this point nearly completed
- Bethel – a key religious center in Israel’s history

#### (2) Their Question “Should I weep and abstain in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?”

##### - A question about religious observance: Should it be continued?

A long-observed fast – a fast held annually in the 5<sup>th</sup> month (Note another in the 7<sup>th</sup> month)  
A commemoration of the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar.

##### - A revealing question!

- Such had not been prescribed by the Lord
- Such observance was far afield from the heart of God’s law. cf. “Religious fads”

##### - An irrelevant question!

- A matter of indifference to the Lord!  
Why? Because the question doesn’t begin to address the real problem!

### 2. The Only Remedy: A Changed Heart! vv. 4-14

#### (1) A Reproof! (4-7) “Say to all the people of the land and to the priests...”

##### - To all the people of the land and the priests (A wide-spread problem!)

##### - These religious observances were void of any true devotion to God!

- Void of the true knowledge of God “When you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted?”  
– true relationship to God
- cf. Is. 1:10-15

##### - The lives of the people were void of true devotion to God! “And when you eat and you drink, do you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves?”

- cf. 1 Cor. 10:31

- “Déjà vu all over again! v. 7 “Were not these the words that the LORD proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous?”
- Preached by the prophets before the captivity!  
In a time of prosperity! cf. Is. 58
- Such reproofs had been further buttressed by the hard providence of captivity!

#### (2) A Call to True Piety (8-14)

- What was missing? vv. 9-10 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.’”
- Any and all of the fruits of true faith!
  - Living according to truth
  - Showing kindness and mercy
  - Showing compassion for the downtrodden
  - Addressing sins of the heart

- What was the remedy? A changed heart! (11-14) “But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear.”
- Proven by the negative example of their forefathers
- Israel’s self-hardening:

- [1] They refused to listen to the Word
- [2] They refused to wear the yoke of obedience.
- [3] They made their hearts diamond-hard!

- Too late for repentance! cf. Prov. 1 “As I called and they would not hear, so they called and I would not hear.”
- Chastening came, the nation scattered.  
The land made desolate!

#### Further Application: