

International Bible Lessons Commentary
Zechariah 7:8-14

New Revised Standard Version

Sunday, August 23, 2015

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The **International Bible Lesson** (also known as the *International Sunday School Lessons* [ISSL] and the *Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, August 23, 2015**, is from **Zechariah 7:8-14**.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help teachers with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study or give as a handout to students in the bulletin-sized edition. A podcast for this commentary is also available at the **International Bible Lesson Forum**.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Zechariah 7:8-14

(Zechariah 7:8) The word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying:

The true prophets of the LORD spoke the true words of the LORD, consistent with the teachings of Moses and the true prophets before them. In contrast, the false

prophets spoke what the kings wanted to hear in order to promote their political agenda and what the priests wanted said to enhance their religious influence over the people. The false prophets would sometimes tell lies about the true prophets of God and try to mislead others away from believing them. Zechariah's prophecy was a true word of the LORD, and the Holy Spirit guided the compilers of the Bible so his book was included.

**(Zechariah 7:9) Thus says the LORD of hosts:
Render true judgments, show kindness and
mercy to one another;**

The LORD reigns over countless numbers of angels and all created beings and creation. No one is more mighty or powerful than the LORD God. God told Zechariah to summarize some of the preaching of the former true prophets. God requires every person, and especially His people, to make just judgments according to the moral law (which He gave in written form to Moses and in the Bible, and by demonstration through Jesus Christ). God has written the moral law on people's hearts and it is revealed in some way in every culture, so no one has an excuse for disobeying God. When exercising just judgments based on truth, those making the judgments are commanded to show kindness and mercy in some way to the person judged—though justice must be fairly administered, it can be administered with kindness. Forgiveness and mercy can be extended to the repentant and those who want to return to obeying God, even though they may still need to suffer just punishment for

their deeds. God commands people to show compassion toward and care for the needy, the weak, and the vulnerable. The moral law of love in written form reveals some of what we should and should not do, and the Holy Spirit will help God's people fulfill God's moral law.

(Zechariah 7:10) do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.

The Bible often mentions the importance of extending special care and consideration toward widows, orphans, and those with special needs. On the one hand, those who obey God will care for the least fortunate in society, and on the other hand, those who obey God will not plot evil against anyone. Other prophets condemned plotting evil overnight so robbery or other crimes could be committed the next day. Sometimes those who have turned their back on God and the moral law will plot evil in a variety of ways against the weakest in society and the least able to defend themselves.

(Zechariah 7:11) But they refused to listen, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears in order not to hear.

Zechariah preached almost seventy years after the fall of Jerusalem. The LORD warned his listeners against doing as their ancestors did that led to the destruction of their kingdom. Their ancestors refused to listen to the word of the LORD or heed the prophets' warnings; therefore,

they suffered the consequences of their disobedience and many of their children were led into exile or had to suffer in a devastated land.

(Zechariah 7:12) They made their hearts adamant in order not to hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts.

Their ancestors not only refused to listen to the word of the LORD, they hardened their hearts as hard as a stone against God whenever they heard the true prophets speak. Therefore, God's just judgement and punishment was the only option left for God to use to change their behavior and save their descendants from following their evil examples. Zechariah revealed how the prophets received the words they spoke: the Spirit of God spoke through them. The Apostle Paul affirmed "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-19). After many years of pleading and seeing His true prophets persecuted, the LORD became angry that His people had continuously rejected His loving-kindness, His words, His Spirit, His patience, and His prophets, so that just punishment was all that remained for Him to do to bring about needed changes.

(Zechariah 7:13) Just as, when I called, they

would not hear, so, when they called, I would not hear, says the LORD of hosts,

God's people would not change their immoral and unjust behavior no matter what God commanded or threatened with kindness and compassion toward sinners; therefore, when His people finally turned toward Him, it was for relief from their just punishment instead of with truly repentant hearts. God refused to remove their just punishment from them. They justly deserved their punishment that the LORD had sent upon them. God had sent a merciful punishment only as a last resort to lead them to true repentance and a return to obedience. When they truly repented, the LORD would listen to their prayers.

(Zechariah 7:14) and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and a pleasant land was made desolate.

The Judeans were responsible for their immoral behavior and the resulting consequences of God's just judgment. They were to blame when God had to scatter them and put them in exile among the nations—especially Babylon, where they were allowed to maintain their identity as Judeans. The Promised Land and Jerusalem had become desolate over seventy years of punishment, but after seventy years God let His people return and rebuild their cities and replant their land as

He promised.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Give some reasons for a study of Zechariah.
2. How can we administer true justice with kindness or mercy and compassion?
3. What are some of the sins that other prophets condemned as well as Zechariah? How serious do you think God considers these sins?
4. How did the ancestors of Zechariah's listeners respond to the words of God spoken through His true prophets?
5. Name one way the punishment of the Kingdom of Israel differed from the Kingdom of Judah.

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly
International Bible Lesson.

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