

The Just shall live by Faith

Volume 1 - Study 20 ‘...the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ (Revelation 19:10)
C. Ronald Johnson, Christian Wilderness Press: Zechariah 7:5,6) ‘**Speak unto all the people of the land...When ye *fasted and mourned* in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, *did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?* And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, *did not ye eat [religiously] for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?*’**

Studies - **‘Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:’**

www.christianwildernesspress.net

These are brief studies, not
“teachings” or “doctrines”.

Volume 1, Study 20

‘...Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:’

These first three paragraphs composed the beginning of Volume 1, Study 19 -

“It seems for the time being in my studies, many of which I am sharing in these studies, that the Lord is dealing with me regarding the present conditions in the world and specifically in the USA... and even more specifically regarding the church... and even more specifically regarding the evangelical part of the church in its varied splintered parts.

I have been struggling with a cold, and with daylight savings time that started a few days ago, and so again I lingered in bed and looking over at my little Bible I picked it up to spend some more time in bed. I turned on the light and opened and it fell to Zechariah 8. It was not long before I was into another study along the same lines as previous studies, and in this case it was in the historic time when the remnant of exiled Judaists from Babylon was returned to the land and was in the struggling process of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem.

Over a couple of hours, I was into chapter 8 and then chapter 7 and then part of chapter 6. The majority of the study as usual will be in these chapters, which I shall insert in the study. Now it is after lunch and sitting in front of this page, and realizing that the study shall be longer than the typical study (I do try to keep them short), I have decided to put off this study until the next, which will be Volume 1, Study 20.”

And now we pick up from the end of Study 19, and I have decided to include all of chapter 6. We shall go through Zechariah chapters 8, 7, and 6 in that order. The time of the passage is when the exiled Jews have returned to what is now called Judaea and they are in the process of building the temple. Cyrus, head of the new and growing empire of the Persians and the Medes, had set the exiles of Judah free to do as they wished. Over seventy years, with God’s help, they had become well established in the land of their captivity. However, some longed for the land promised to Abraham...the land of their unique ancient religion of Yahweh.

These Jews are jealous for their God who had moved upon Cyrus in dreams to send any who wanted to return to go and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, the holy city of Yahweh. Some sixteen years before this passage in Zechariah, the first of the remnant had arrived and set up living conditions in the land according to their land records by tribes and families (i.e. the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Simeon). Now sixteen years later the work of the temple’s foundation is accomplished with the temple progressing slowly, for the people have been thinking that first they must establish themselves on the land. (Many years before, in exiling the northern kingdom of Israel, the Assyrians had moved many peoples from elsewhere onto the Promise Land. Then during the exile period of the southern kingdom of Judah, many more had moved in.)

Even so, God had seen to it that but few had actually taken up residence in the land of Judah. Thus, the returning remnant had little difficulty settling down...except that they have very little money and essentially no jobs. (Through the ages there have been many times in many different places when God’s people have had little money and essentially no jobs. God has always brought through those who all along have trusted Him.) It was like pioneers moving west in America.

On the other hand, their neighbors are well established in their varied livelihoods and they

view the returning Jews as a threat. Moreover, the Persian government is taking care of the ragtag Jews (though on a subsistence level) and the neighbors have had to do for themselves all these years. Why should the government take taxes from them and give it to these Jews?

Such is the scene in Judaea as Zechariah begins to prophesy and he has been prophesying for several years before these chapters of our study. As a result, the initial and fundamental reason for the return (both with Cyrus and with the remnant) is to rebuild the temple for the glory of Yahweh. But as it is with all people, we live more in our need to take care of ourselves and our families than in any other mode of need. First Things with God are pushed somewhat aside as we consider the immediate need to be more worthy of our attention. The temple work is slow going. God knows...and He has been quietly working...and He has been sending the prophets... and the people have been hearing the prophets...and the people are frustrated because they simply do not know how to respond to God. "Lord, things are tough!"

God has continually been speaking to His people Israel. Check the list of prophets in study 19. However, most of what God has said in prophecy during that period (available to us in scripture) is in the Book of Zechariah. The entire book of Zechariah is entirely worthy of study for the End Times, which to some extent we are doing in these studies, but our main concern in these studies are messages for Christians today.

We shall study chapter 8 first to see what God is about to do in His plan for the remnant that is frustrated and depressed in the work for the families and in God's work of the temple. The people are tired. And chapter 8 is the good news from God regarding their religious, spiritual, and natural lives. Things will be looking up.

Next we shall study Chapter 7, which describes their condition upon the land and before the Lord. God has been working in each individual. He has been giving them messages by His prophets. He loves those of His frustrated and weary people who are willing to be pressed down under His willful hand. Ah, but before the good news arrives to them they must be prepared 1) by His willful pressing hand and 2) by the messages that first He must drill into them.

The Lord will be speaking to them of two separate periods of time this chapter:

1) These people think that they and their fathers had been doing pretty well in their walk before the Lord in their seventy years of captivity. God had promised to bless them there and He truly did; so surely they had been doing something right. Yet, the Lord through Zechariah will inform them that they and their fathers had been fooling themselves by this kind of thinking. (Is the Church of our day in such a captivity-situation?)

2) Also the people of the remnant think of themselves as especially worthy and spiritual for their sacrifice in having left their settled homes, family, and friends to resettle even as homesteaders reclaiming the Promised Land. "We are working for God and suffering for Him. Moreover, we are trying our very best to win over as many of our neighbors as we can, but most of them look down on us and many of them hate us and wish we would go away." (Is the Church of our day in this kind of situation?)

If neither of these situations is where we live today then Zechariah has little to say to us personally. "But there is much about the End Times in Zechariah," you may be saying, "which should be our main interest...for we are ready for Jesus to come any day now...especially as things are getting tougher in the economies in America and in the world...and Israel may be attacked by Iran soon...and..." Time (which is always the Lord's time) will tell.

In chapter 6, which prophecy came to the people before chapters 7 and 8, is one of the great Messiah passages. We shall not spend as much time there, but the important thing in this study is to know that these people were right smack in the center of God's Plan of the Ages in Jesus Christ. They seem rather small in their tired condition and in their past complaining and in their wrong thinking about their spirituality. Yet, they are chosen. They are *imperfect* people walking (and struggling) along in God's *perfect* timing and path toward the coming of their Messiah. They have no idea that it will be yet 400 more years before he arrives as a babe.

After going through all of it, another reading of chapter 7 is advisable.

- The Good News finally arrives -

Zechariah 8:1-2) Again the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.

The Lord is speaking of the recent past, the 70 years in Babylon. However, so far in the Promised Land (sixteen years) things have been difficult. The *remnant* (i.e. differentiated from *the great many Jews that did not return*) has had permission, and to some extent has had finances, to build the temple which is under construction. However, the neighbors continuously travel to the headquarters of the empire, north and east of the Euphrates River, trying to stop the building or at least stop the funding. God had been quite upset with his people of Judah (obviously) to have sent them into exile. And he has been upset still with the returned exiles, which has been clear in the prophecies *up to this point*.

8:3) Thus saith the LORD; [however] I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.

As far as a direct connection to the people, God has been away from them, both in His Spirit and in honoring their paltry sacrifices, which so far the people and priests could not and cannot properly do without a temple in which the priesthood can function. God's relationship with His people Israel (as a nation, though not individually) continues within the Mosaic Law. The Law is the Mediator between the nation and Yahweh (see Volume 1, Study 5), which Mediator in the proper Season will become Jesus Christ...Priest/King and Fulfillment of the Law. The Mosaic Law requires the holy city Jerusalem, the temple, and the priesthood, etc.

God is returned to this *remnant* in the way that He had been...with the inference that His people should have learned from what they had gone through in Babylon. Indeed He has plans for Jerusalem and Judaea.

8:4) Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very [old] age.

The wording of prophecy, as we are looking back on it, is clearly pointing to the End Times and to Jesus as King upon his throne in Jerusalem for 1000 years. From the time of this prophecy, God's people Israel shall continue to fall far short of their potential with Him, yet God's Plan of the Ages in Christ Jesus shall be fulfilled. Moreover, God's people Israel have been, they are, and they shall be...by God's choosing...a physical earthly part of the Plan. The prophetic wording that points to the End Times continues -

8:5-6) And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; [And so] If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts.

God is speaking of the End Times. Yet, He is inviting the people into some of these blessings in the present. The people do not know that the End Times are far distant. (Nor yet do we know today.) If the people will consider what the Lord shall be doing (i.e. blessings amid their difficulties and surrounded by enemies) then He will surely consider His doings a marvelous thing to do for them and work for them.

8:7-8) Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.

God will do this in the End Times. But He shall in the present and leading up to the time of Jesus' birth (some 400 years in the future) bring in many more of His scattered people from among the nations. Over the following 400 years the remnant people shall come, both in permanent moves and in many pilgrimages to Jerusalem and to the temple. But also, like the Eunuch being drawn to Jerusalem and Philip testifying to him, God shall bring unto Himself many Gentiles of the nations.

8:9-10) Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which [prophets I brought in and they] were [with you ever since] in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built. For before these days [of laying the foundation and building the temple] there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast [after you returned here]; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction [of your hateful neighbors]: for I set all men [even some among yourselves] every one against his neighbour.

From the time the remnant began returning until this time, things and times have been tough. And though the temple is progressing, each person discouragingly wonders if it will ever be finished. Discouragement of slow going mixed in with faulty zeal for God engenders brethren setting against brethren and neighbor setting against neighbor.

Are Christians today in such a time? Or are we still *in Babylon* where many are enjoying some of the blessings of God in *captivity*...even as a few Christians long for the land of God's promise...even if in promise it be heavily weighed down with trials amid confusion and not knowing what to do or what will happen next?

Dear reader, think about it and about this passage.

8:11) But now I will not be unto the residue of this people [i.e. the remnant in Judaea] as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts.

Note that the passage had begun with God referring to Himself as '**the Lord of hosts**' *in His past anger*, and now He continues as '**the Lord of hosts**' in *His good pleasure* because He is going to protect and bless them such that His strength becomes obvious to their neighbors and to the world. Compared to their past days it shall be glorious.

From our historical point of view, we see that the people are heading toward the coming of baby Jesus some 400 years in the future, and Jesus shall cast out moneychangers from this (though greatly expanded) temple.

Around the middle of the 400 years, with the Greeks taking over rule in Judaea...and the Jews greatly resenting it...thus manifesting their resentment in moodiness...they shall become entrenched in semi-depression due, once again, to a *renewed* lack of freedom in their own 'Promised Land'. God had taken them from the land of their enemies, but now He has brought the enemies on to the land...His land and their land.

And each day things will be getting worse, for it will seem that their rulers shall become more and more ungodly. Therefore, the Jews shall enter a period of protectionism toward the holy city Jerusalem, the temple, and their Yahweh religion. They will be frustrated and angry and will hate their rulers...first the Greeks and then the Romans... because they will have no power to change things. At the end of the 400 years the Conjunction of the Ages shall come in and baby Jesus is born.

8:12-13) For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And it shall come to pass, that as ye were [by your neighbors considered to be] a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing [among them]: fear not, but let your hands be strong.

The fullness of these words shall not become established in the land until the End Times because of the stiff-necked stubbornness that continues to run cycles through God's

people (and through the Church throughout Christian history). Even so, there are times when God really does work goodness in His people and blessing to those around His people, sometimes overflowing.

Even since Isaiah's time, the Lord speaks to the entities that have become the two separated houses of what used to be united Israel. With God, it is still one house, only fractured. So it is with the Church. In Him we are one.

8:14-15) For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.

8:16-17) These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.

These are the things the people will do during the first half of the 400 years, whereupon their cycle will turn to associations and protectionism of what they had come to think they must protect for God...even as it is today in the Church in America since about our late 1950s and early 1960s (i.e. in my estimation).

Moreover, note that 'Lord of hosts' occurs twice, manifesting God's strong emphasis on what He is mightily doing. Also note that He is doing it to the returned remnant of the house of Judah and not to the house of Israel. Though it comes undeserved to the remnant, it is according to God's Plan of the Ages in Christ Jesus.

Through my lifetime God has worked blessings (the things we consider good) to some of the Church in the world and grief (the things we consider bad) to some of the Church.

Consider the American Church: Have we been the blessed Church? and have we grown spiritually? What of the grieved Church in the world? have they grown spiritually?

8:18) And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying,

The 'word of the Lord of hosts' is reemphasized. Are the people of the remnant and are we to pay attention? The Lord here is taking the emphasis off of religiosity (which is always necessary though it is not the essential thing) and placing it on *the Spirit of truth and the well-being of the higher nature which He has placed inside His people.*

The Mosaic Law was given as a strict guide to God's people as a whole (i.e. a nation). Yet, only as the Spirit applied some aspect of the Law to an individual was he *quicken*ed by it. All of the Old and New Testaments (the written Word) works the same for Christians: only as the Spirit applies some aspect of the Word to an individual is he *quicken*ed by it.

Yes, we learn from the Bible, yet that is not the same as being *quicken*ed. Jesus said that his words were of the Father and that by the Spirit his words *quicken*ed only some folks. Indeed, at differing times the very same words by the Spirit *quicken*ed the disciples; for not until later did the Spirit bring some of Jesus' words back to them in *quicken*ed form.

The higher spiritual self or what Paul calls the innerman, when functional and alive by means of faith is the individual guide for the individual walk of the individual child of God. (See the book God's Hook.) So it was in the days of the Law.

This, then, when observed corporately by people outside, honors God and is, in fact, His glory manifested in humbled human form. It was when the humility wore off from this remnant in the middle of the 400 years (replaced by the obstinacy of thinking God needed them) that God's glory departed. Humble-glory kept the enemy at bay as God smiled in approval upon His people.

Are the enemies of the Church in America at bay? We think that we have God's glory individually and corporately...in this group or that group or in this church or that church or when listening to "praise music" as we drive, work, run, or walk. But people of the outside see things; and, sadly, they do not see what the Lord of hosts is speaking about to

this remnant in this passage. The enemies of God scorn us and the rest of the people scratch their heads when wondering about us. So it was in Zechariah's day.

Inside our religious groupings, what do we see of ourselves? We think association is strength. We think worship-fellowship (which is corporate religion even as it was with the Israelites) is what God requires of us. And we think we are protecting God's spiritual things for Him. And we try to win our neighbors. Mostly it is those folks who want something from the Church that respond, at least for a while, until the church down the street seems to have more...

8:19) Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace [provided by God].

According to the Mosaic Law, these were the days required for fasting. The people of this remnant shall continue to do them even through and unto the time of Jesus' birth and beyond. Ah, but the Lord's transformation of *fasting to feasting* shall not arrive to them until He causes it to happen. In other words, it is not something for them to do; instead it is something for God to work out.

Upon Jesus' death, the disciples experienced fasting...until the Father, by means of His Resurrected Son, turned their physical fast into spiritual feast. The individual child of God, amidst the work of God's humbling process, must take spiritual comfort in his or her humbling path...for it is His path...until He who humbles transforms fasting into feasting.

We always seem to think that we should arrange things and work such things out and then the Lord will bless us. That was the (Old) concept in the Mosaic Law and it was the mindset of the Jews. But only God could do it (and only in part) to His remnant people of the house of Judah. And it has not yet happened for God's people of the house of Israel. But it shall happen.

8:20-21) Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also.

Compared to the fullness of this passage (i.e. when Jesus shall come again and take his throne) the passage did not come true for the Jews in Jerusalem. Ah, but even so, in the New Testament we do see it accomplished in part in a number of examples: consider the instance of Philip with the Eunuch. Indeed, many people by the time of Jesus' birth (both Israelites and others from around the known world) were arriving in Jerusalem to worship Yahweh. Therefore, it was in the 'fullness of time' that Christ arrived on earth.

Moreover in a recent study in Jeremiah, we saw where the people of the cities came together in Jerusalem for such a purpose...and that God gave to Jeremiah a message for them. Similarly it would happen in the first 200 years of the 400 years. Remember: The first 200 years of those 400 years were blessed of God...and the people did respond to Him in the way that He had asked them to do in this passage of Zechariah.

(Of the 400 years of the children of Israel in Egypt, it happened similarly. The first two years, mostly with Joseph still alive, were blessed of God as He caused the Egyptians to look graciously upon His people.)

8:22-23) Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.

'The Lord of hosts' continues to emphasize that He is 'the Lord of hosts'. He is very strong in what He shall be doing, and all the hosts of heaven are in attendance watching.

Note that the wording has changed from ‘**these days**’ to ‘**those days**’.

In the early years of the Church, Christians were being persecuted and scattered. In that scattering, people were taking hold of them, being drawn to God and to His Son, even as God was building His Church amid very difficult times. Take note that those Christians were remnant Israelites of ‘the house of Judah’.

- God tells what the people must know before they hear the Good News -

Zechariah 7:1) And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu;

Pay attention to how much this passage is within the Mosaic Law, to which God is returning His people of Judah so as to walk in it as they are meant to walk in it...with a holy city, temple, and priesthood. They had been in Babylon 70 years, some of them longer (after those 70 years Daniel was still living and working in the Persian Empire). God’s people had focused upon Babylonian things (not having God’s presence in the temple and sacrifices, etc.). Therefore, God has brought back a remnant to where He wants them to be for His ongoing purpose.

The Church in America, since the late 1950s and early 1960s (in my opinion), has become much worldlier (even as “the Moral Majority, etc. has fought the good fight”). In trying to save the world, we have focused more on the world and how it works so as to save it (yes I love the America that I have known) than upon our Lord and Master.

You may say, “If He does not want us to win the world, then what does He want?!” My response is, “I do not know. However, we could take a break from our work to rest for a while (see Hebrews 4), and wait on Him, focus on Him, become humbled by Him.”

7:2) When they [i.e. the people of the city of Bethel] had sent unto the house of God [two righteous men] Sherezzer and Regemmelech, and their men [that accompanied them], to pray before the LORD,

See 8:16,17 and 21 above. Understand that the prophet Zechariah came upon the scene in Judaea in 520 BC, but the remnant had been returning from Babylon to Judaea from as early as 536 with orders and finances from Cyrus the Persian to rebuild the temple. For some 16 years the temple project had barely moved along and at times it had stopped altogether. All of life is a struggle for the people even though the remnant is in good standing with the Persians. The people are truly depressed.

7:3) And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?

These men, and the city of Bethel, have not yet received the prophecy of chapter 8; yet, note the spiritual concern, even as it is manifested within their religious concern. The city of Bethel and these men love the Land of Promise and are zealous for the things of God. Yet, they have been suffering even while involved in the building of the temple. The building work was giving them some income, but they also had to develop their farms and vineyards even as their neighbors refused to buy from them. Only in chapter 8 do we see God saying that He is going to change their situation from struggle to joy, their farms and vineyards to become greatly productive as God restores blessing back into the land.

7:4) Then [in answer] came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying,

7:5) Speak unto [these men and unto] all the people of the land, and to the priests [i.e. who had sent these men], saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years [in Babylon], did ye at all [actually] fast unto me, even to me?

Dear reader, we are into the message that I believe the Lord has for His Church.

7:6-7) And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye [instead] eat [religiously] for

yourselves, and drink [religiously] for yourselves? Should ye not hear [i.e. have heard and even now are hearing] the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was [yet] inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men [of Judah] inhabited the south and the plain?

Note in the prophet's words: that God considers His people as a unit (as one)...past, present, and certainly in the future. None of the Israelites achieved the part of the Mosaic Law that says 'love your neighbor as yourself' ('your neighbor' *being a fellow Israelite*).

In Jesus' parable...to show who 'one's neighbor' is...he presented the Samaritan as a man that knew who his neighbor was. The priest and others of religious bent who were walking along that road had long ago lost the 'neighbor concept' essential to the Law as they walked in their Yahweh religion. Over the history of Israel, the fasting and the feasts of the Law very often became simply a part of a religion of "doing things" for God.

Christians are to love (agape) their neighbor Christian, a family brother or sister. It is a heaven-family-love thing. Also we are to love, as God loves, those outside the family; but we are *particularly to agape each and every one within God's family*.

The 'south' referred to *the south facing ranges of hills and mountains and their cities, which were called the Negev, located 'south' in Judah*. The 'plain' referred to *the large pastureland located between the Dead Sea on its north and the Gulf of Aqaba on its south*. These had been controlled by the kingdom of Judah before Nebuchadnezzar took the people exiled to Babylon. Out of them much wealth had come to Judah.

7:8) And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying,

Here is yet another emphasis by God. We now know that a similar emphasis is in chapter 8 and has to do with personal and individual responsibility. The emphasis here is for the same purpose.

7:9) Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:

7:10) And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil [oh, how Christians are prone to this] against his brother in your heart.

This is the very message that God had continually given their fathers. Indeed, from their scriptures, the Psalms, and the prophets the people of the remnant are well aware of it. Even in Babylon these things were what God still had against His people. Ah, but is God still against His people? Chapter 8 begins clarifying that God is not against them, but is very much for them.

7:11) But they [i.e. your mothers and fathers] refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

In pulling away the shoulder(s) from the Lord's chosen load (so as to put our shoulders to our chosen load for Him) we find ourselves unable to hearken due to clogged ears. The clear implication '**that they should not hear**' means that (though they would deny it) they had purposefully done so. That which we have decided to do, we become associated with it; and we come to value it more and more...and "Everyone cannot be wrong!"

But perhaps we can become self-deceived (the condition of clogged ears). Interesting, is it not, how shifting the shoulder clogs the ears and the thing in which we labor becomes highly valued, very high on our list of priorities.

Interesting (though we hardly notice it in service to God) how shifting of the shoulders focuses one into hearing more from the brethren.

7:12) Yea, they [had] made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should [actually] hear the law, and [actually hear] the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.

7:13-14) Therefore it is come to pass [i.e. passed tense, up until now], that as he [i.e. God] cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of

hosts: But I scattered them [first Israel and then Judah] **with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not** [i.e. with who they were not personally familiar...away from Palestine]. **Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they** [in their obstinacy had] **laid the pleasant land desolate.**

What of the Church today, what have we done to the land? Have we protected the land of America from God's enemies?



Pay close attention that God, in this chapter 7, has been answering the religious, spiritual, and caring men sent by the priests of the city of Bethel. And note that God addressed His answer to all the people, the priests, and the prophets. Also note that God has not yet given the prophetic words of chapter 8.

Therefore, just before giving the message in chapter 8, God has pointed out three time periods of the past doings of His people of Judah: 1) before their exile, 2) in Babylon where on the one hand they had cried out for God to help them return and on the other hand in fasts and festivals they had religiously associated among themselves more than they had fasted in the proper and true fear of the Lord, and 3) now they are returned for sixteen years as the remnant in the Promised Land and are having a difficult time being "victorious in the Lord".

They are depressed and are wondering if fulfilling the Mosaic Law's fasts would help the situation. They are depressed and the temple's construction is waning.

Note the present hard living conditions amid strife in obedience by working the best that one can in the conditions pressed upon him. God is working *in blessing and in strength*, yet only in a low and nearly unseen manner, such that the neighbors looking in cannot see God working. God's people can barely see Him working; so perhaps fulfilling the law of fasts may help.

These Jews in their poor struggling condition know that God is with them; but only God knows what He has in store...leading on to *the arrival of Jesus the Anointed One* some 400 years later. They have no idea that they must wait that long for their Messiah.

The mindset of Christians today is that God is working now, or shall work in our own near future. He will work the things we read in scripture and what we hear preached and the wonders in the books we read. In other words, we live and think in the present...as has every individual person on this planet down through the ages. Even the prophets had mental difficulty (even with God's help) gazing into the future, which is why they always had to simply speak what God gave them to speak. True prophets would never prophesy what they thought God meant. They did some preaching and teaching...very carefully. They were prophets, not teachers and preachers.

If the angels in heaven, gazing down upon God's people, search scripture to compare it to what is and has been happening through the ages so as to better understand where in God's Plan of the Ages we humans are today...and if Jesus Christ does not know the Time of the End...

Have you ever been near the end of your rope, and you knew it was God at the other end holding you firm, and in time you came to relax somewhat in God and in His strength...yet not a single person knows that God has His Holy Eye upon you and that you are safe? At first such a thing is fearful, then it is comforting, and then it is assuring...but then it becomes frustrating as every person that matters to you continues feeling sorry for you or begins thinking "you are strange" and that they should be worried about your condition or... Well, you know.

The people of Judaea, newly returned and attempting to build a new temple at God's command, really want their neighbors to understand how great their God is. It is altogether significant that He has brought back this remnant to the land promised to Abraham; and so the neighbors should realize the greatness of Yahweh. Ah, but the neighbors only see their return as a threat. Now some 16 years have passed and everything is stymied and the testimony of God's greatness has waned. Construction stands on the foundation unfinished. The children of God can only be excited and zealous for so long. How do God's people, who want to live in peace with

their neighbors, who want to share with and win many of them to Yahweh, continue working when they feel under so much pressure?

Perhaps the fasts of the law will help. Perhaps prayer and fasting. Let us go to Zechariah and he will ask God and surely God will tell us what to do, for we must be doing something to rectify the situation. The reputation of the Lord depends on it. We cannot just sit and hope.

- Before God tells what the people must know for them, He tells them of the Messiah -

Zechariah 6:1) And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass.

The ‘**Lord of hosts**’ is in complete control of the nations. He is going to subdue all the chaos that has been continuing in the Bible Lands due first to the Assyrians and then followed by the Babylonians. The Persians and the Medes are going to maintain steady control over the nations for many years, such that God’s remnant people of Judah will be but slightly resisted in the things that God will be doing for them (though not until chapter 8 will they get the clear message of it.)

The mountains of brass represent the mountains to either side of Jerusalem because God has returned to His holy city without temple and without a wall. Poor pitiful Jerusalem.

6:2-7) In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country. And the bay went forth, and [so they] sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth.

6:8) Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.

- Now God shall do something strange to the Law, change the Aaron priesthood -

6:9-10) And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon [i.e. the remnant returned to Judaea], and come thou [immediately] the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah;

6:11) Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest;

Carefully take note here: This is the very first time that a priest of the Aaron priesthood receives a crown. Take note that it is a direct command from ‘**the Lord of hosts**’ and that ‘**in one day**’ this priest is taken out of the old priesthood to receive a crown. He is Joshua (which translated means ‘Jesus’) and he is the present high priest newly arrived with the remnant to Judaea, and he shall perform his functions as high priest (with the new crowns present) in the new temple when it is ready.

It is unheard of. If tradition and strict obedience to Moses’ Law means anything then this is a clear breaking away from God’s Way. Yes, they have no king to sit on the throne of David. There is no person surviving whom God might even point to as He did to Saul and then to David. By the scriptures and the Law, only a son of David shall take the

throne.

It makes some sort of sense that the high priest should handle such kingly things in a nation like Judaea with its Yahweh religion ruling over everything. Yet, the priests are of the family of Aaron of the tribe of Levi. The throne is reserved for a man of the tribe of Judah. Is this not why God has brought us Jews back to the land? Just perhaps Zechariah has been drinking too much wine, or something.

6:12) And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH [or The Bud, i.e. new growth of a New Season]; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD:

This man, Joshua, becomes something very new before the Lord, a forerunning type of Jesus as high priest. Never had a priest built a tabernacle or a temple. Moses built the first tabernacle. King David built the second tabernacle, followed soon by the first temple built by King Solomon.

During the 400 coming years, Joshua's tenure as high priest (with crowns and the authority that goes with crowns) became a modified priesthood which would work out of a new temple. This temple would become greatly expanded and glorified under King Herod shortly before Jesus' birth.

Therefore, the office of high priest operated something like a king of Judaea. This continued when Palestine was taken over by the Greek empire of Alexander the Great. The high priest had around him attendants of religious leaders, religious parties, scribes, organizations of elders, etc. It was called the Sanhedrin, meaning *the highest tribunal or council*. Priests of lesser rank in differing districts also had lesser tribunals or councils.

However, when the Romans took over from the Greeks they began appointing the high priests of Judaea to rule only over religious matters. Moreover, for high priests they picked men of repute faithful to Rome, though the normal priesthood continued of the family of Aaron. Thus, the Romans set up a separate throne and king for matters having to do with government to work directly with the Roman Magistrate. Rome had no desire to deal with the many religions in their many conquered lands with their many and varied religious matters.

Jesus went before all three: the high priest's throne and the Sanhedrin, Israel's Roman appointed king on his throne, and Rome's magistrate on his throne. The temple was destroyed by the Romans (due to the ongoing rebellion of these remnant Jews) some 60 years after Jesus' resurrection.

So then, this change by God of the priesthood's government (combining crowns and kingly authority for the high priest) would last for over 400 years...similar to Israel lasting 400 years in Egypt. As God tells us very little of the stay in Egypt, so God tells us little of the years of the changed position of the high priest and of his government. God rescued His chosen people from the human rule in Egypt so as to be ruled only by Him.

Yet, in all that time to the time of Zechariah's prophecy, the Mosaic Law operated as a Mediator between the people and God...and it continued to do so...but affected by this change of the high priest. With the end of the following 400 years, and the high priest operating in kingly authority, God shall introduce to His people their Messiah, His only begotten Son, the King/Priest.

But also note that this 400 year period portrays what shall occur in the short days of our Lord Jesus. Observe the parallel: In 'one day' Joshua begins his crowned priesthood and in 400 years (due to the growing obstinacy of the Jews) the priesthood with crowns is crushed by the Romans, and never again shall there be an Aaron priesthood of any kind.

Then in 'one day' baby Jesus arrives suddenly as King/Priest, born as a human baby without sin. Rejected by obstinate Jews, he too is crushed (crucified) by the Romans. In Jesus' obedience to the Father, he has earned his kingdom and shall in 'one day' arrive to claim it.

(I know that this is a lot of information, but dear reader you can handle all of it, for God gives it to us by His Spirit in the Word and by His Spirit as we prayerfully study it.)

6:13) Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

Here of course is Jesus Christ upon the throne in his 1000 year reign with a new temple in the holy city of Jerusalem. Note that ‘**the counsel of peace shall be between them both**’; that is, peace shall be between the human priesthood and the Godly High Priest. He shall rule over a united nation of priests.

6:14) And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah [and the brother of Joshua], for a memorial in the temple of the LORD.

The crowns are placed upon Joshua (6:11), but after the prophecy is declared about him the crowns go to these other priests. This depicts the connection and ruling factor of the priests under this new kind of high priest...a type of Jesus Christ the ultimate High Priest with ‘many crowns’.

6:15) And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD, and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.

Over the coming 400 years many Jews and Gentiles of the nations will increasingly stream to Jerusalem on pilgrimages. So it will be in the time of Jesus and they will witness his crucifixion and hear of his resurrection. In the End Times when God calls His people Israel out of the nations unto Jerusalem, ‘ten Gentiles shall catch hold of the coattails of such Israelites and go with them’ unto Jerusalem with its new temple where Jesus Christ will rule as Priest/King. The battles will not take long, though the land will be bloody for some years with righteous men assigned to hunt for and collect the bones of the enemies of Almighty God. Thus shall the land of promise become purified.



We began in chapter 8 to aid us in understanding what God was doing so that in chapter 7 we would understand the seriousness of the message to the depressed people of Judaea. Then we went to chapter 6 where is one of the marvelous prophecies of the coming Messiah. And we see there the rather strange connection of the prophecy regarding Joshua, a *newly crowned* priest. Surely the depressed people must have been wondering about what that could mean, even as they struggled with building the temple and enduring ongoing hatred and harassment by their Gentile neighbors. In the Book of Ezra, we see how some of the Gentile leaders had made friends with some of the Judean leaders. In this friendship, the Gentile leaders had even gained admittance into some of the rooms of the new temple.

Oh how earthy have been the ways of the Church as it has struggled through the centuries to maintain the message of the Messiah’s return and maintain some kind of high spirituality over the normal path and walk of mankind. It has always been so. The Messiah came, but he was rejected. The Church, too, is rejected by its neighbors. Moreover, inside the organizations of the Church the essential true Church is rejected by many of the children of the Church.

Even as the Jews in Judaea in Zechariah’s day were really trying hard, they were depressed and hated by their neighbors and struggled to do what God wanted them to do. The Writer of Hebrews, especially in chapter 4, calls all the children of God even today to learn how to walk before Him in His Rest, instead of walking in our sometime zeal and sometime depression. It is altogether foolish to constantly consider ourselves as more important to God than we are. Paul warned us of it. God’s Plan of the Ages in Christ Jesus marches on. Each individual child of God can be motivated by it and be in some tiny way part of it...or not.

The God-humbled child of God cannot, when continuing in such humility, be taken over

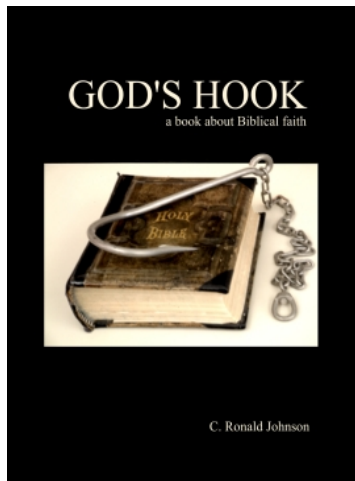
by either much-zeal or much-depression. This humility is stable enough for an individual to ‘**stand in the evil day**’ in the ‘**full armor of God, quenching all the fiery darts of the enemy**’ with the ‘**shield of faith**’ in the *up position*. (The book, God’s Hook, is about Biblical faith.)

Whenever an individual ‘**stands**’ before the enemy, instead of trying to fight the enemy, he or she has more time and presence of mind and spirit to study the Written Word and to peer ‘**as through a glass darkly**’ into how God is working His work of the ages. Jesus Christ is the Living Word. Prophecy about him in the Written Word is -

Revelation 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for [indeed,] the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

It would benefit the reader to read again chapter 7.

These are short Bible studies by C. Ronald Johnson at Christian Wilderness Press



a book
about
Biblical
Faith

the life of
Moses
and the
Exodus

