

13. What three additional assertions does Zechariah make concerning The Branch?
14. How could Jesus have won the allegiance of those who brought about His crucifixion?
15. Distinguish between taking the Bible "literally," and taking it "materialistically."
16. Show how the counsel of peace is between the kingly and priestly functions of the Messiah.
17. What was to be done with the two crowns following Joshua's coronation?
18. Discuss "Those that are afar off." (v. 15) in connection with *Acts 2:39* and *Ephesians 2:17*.
19. The ultimate temple built by our King-Priest is a habitation for God _____
20. What recurs another time in the close of this section?

CHAPTER XXXVI

TEACHING ABOUT WORSHIP

Chapter seven has been called "*A Call to Civic Duty.*" We cannot subscribe to this summary of the prophetic message contained in this chapter, but we mention it to underscore a truth which shines through both chapters seven and eight, namely that outward formal religious observances unrelated to present life are an affront to God. His promises are to those whose relationship to Him makes a real difference in their relationship to their fellowmen.

QUESTIONS ABOUT FASTING . . . Zechariah 7:1-3

RV . . . And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of Jehovah came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu. Now they of Beth-el had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech, and their men, to entreat the favor of Jehovah, and to speak unto the priests of the house of Jehovah of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these many years?

LXX . . . And it came to pass in the fourth year of Darius the king, that the word of the Lord came to Zacharias on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Cheseleu. And Sarasar and Arbeseer the king and his men sent to Baethel, and that to propitiate the Lord, speaking to

to the priests that were in the house of the Lord Almighty, and to the prophets, saying, The holy offering has come in hither in the fifth month, as it has done already many years.

COMMENTS

On December 4, 518 B.C., just over two years after the beginning of Zechariah's prophetic ministry, the Jews who lived in Beth-el sent two envoys, Sharezer and Regem-melech, to inquire of the priests of Jehovah concerning the continuation of the fasts which for seventy years had commemorated the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

Beth-el is located east of an imaginary line running north from Jerusalem to Nablus.

Beth-el's ruins were discovered by Robinson and are now identified with the village of Betin. Formerly inhabited by Canaanite kings, it became home to a number of Jews following the captivity. In Zechariah's day, as in the time of the pre-exilic divided kingdom, Beth-el lay just south of the border that divided Judea and Israel. In New Testament days the boundary between Judea and Samaria ran south of the village. This has led some to the erroneous conclusion that Zechariah's visitors were Samaritans, while in point of fact they were Jews returned from Babylon. They had settled in the northernmost part of what was originally the land of Benjamin and they had come to Jerusalem for instruction concerning the requirements of worship on the part of the returnees.

(Verse 3) The question asked is, "*Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself as I have these so many years?*" The concern is for the facts which related to the captivity.

In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which marked the nineteenth anniversary of Nebuchadnezzar's ascending the throne of Babylon, he sent his servant to Jerusalem to burn the temple and main buildings of the city.

In the seventh month, apparently of the same year, a member of the Babylonian royal family had assassinated the Jewish governor, Gedaliah, of Judah, and the Jews who were with him.

In memory of those two tragic events the Jews had fasted twice a year on the days marking their occurrence. It had been a burdensome experience for a people in captivity. The people of Beth-el now want to know if it is required to continue the practice.

THE FIRST ANSWERING STATEMENT . . . Zechariah 7:4-7

RV . . . Then came the word of Jehovah of hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and in the seventh month, even these seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? And when ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? Should ye not hear the words which Jehovah cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, and the South and the lowland were inhabited?

LXX . . . And the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, Speak to the whole people of the land, and to the priests, saying, Though ye fasted or lamented in the fifth or seventh months (yea, behold, these seventy years) have ye at all fasted to me? And if ye eat or drink, do ye not eat and drink for yourselves? Are not these words which the Lord spoke by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and her cities round about her, and the hill country and the low country was inhabited?

COMMENTS

(Verses 4-7) Zechariah's answer to the question from Beth-el is made in six statements. Each statement is introduced with exact statements which indicate the prophet's words were actually those of Jehovah.

The *first* of these statements begins with 7:4 and continues through 7:7. The *second* begins with 7:8 and concludes the chapter. The *third* begins at 8:1 and runs through 8:7. The *fourth* statement begins with 8:9 and continues through 8:13. The *fifth* statement begins at 8:14 and ends with 8:17. The *sixth* and final statement in answer to the question from Beth-el begins with 8:18 and closes the chapter. It also forms the final paragraph of the first section of Zechariah's writing.

Jehovah's *first* answering statement (7:4-7) begins by reminding the questioners that the fasts in question had not been instituted by any divine directive. The reminder is in the form of three questions. "*Did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?*" "*And when ye eat and when ye drink, do not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?*"

To paraphrase these first two questions we might say "*When you began fasting in memory of the destruction and death, did you ask me?*"

The obvious conclusion is stated in the third question, "*Should ye not hear (more accurately have heard) the words which Jehovah cried by the former prophets . . . ?*" It would have been better for them

to have heard and heeded the former prophets than to have invented fasts for themselves with no divine directive.

The former prophets were those who had preached in the times before the captivity. The practice of what they taught would have been the appropriate response to the captivity rather than self-appointed fasts of mourning. Rather than mourn over what God had brought upon them, they should have corrected the circumstances which caused Him to punish them.

THE SECOND ANSWERING STATEMENT . . . Zechariah 7:8-14

RV . . . And the word of Jehovah came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus hath Jehovah of hosts spoken, saying, Execute true judgement, and show kindness and compassion every man to his brother; and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the sojourner, nor the poor; and let none of you devise evil against his brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they might not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which Jehovah of hosts had sent by his Spirit by the former prophets: therefore there came great wrath from Jehovah of hosts. And it is come to pass that, as he cried, and they would not hear, so they shall cry, and I will not hear, said Jehovah of hosts; but I will scatter them with a whirlwind among all the nations which they have not known. Thus the land was desolate after them, so that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

LXX . . . And the word of the Lord came to Zacharias, saying, Thus saith the Lord Almighty; Judge righteous judgement, and deal mercifully and compassionately every one with his brother: and oppress not the widow, or the fatherless, or the stranger, or the poor; and let not one of you remember in his heart the injury of his brother. But they refused to attend, and madly turned their back, and made their ears heavy, so that they should not hear. And they made their heart disobedient, so as not to hearken to my law, and the words which the Lord Almighty sent forth by his Spirit by the former prophets: so there was great wrath from the Lord Almighty. And it shall come to pass, that as he spoke, and they hearkened not, so they shall cry, and I will not hearken, saith the Lord Almighty. And I will cast them out among all the nations, whom they know not; and the land behind them shall be made utterly destitute of any going through or returning: yea they have made the choice land a desolation.

COMMENTS

The second answering statement to the questioners from Beth-el is a summary of what was taught by the former prophets. (It would be helpful here to review at least one of the pre-exilic prophets, possibly Micah.)

(Verses 8-10) The demands of God which, if heeded, would have averted the necessity of the Babylonian exile can by no means be called unreasonable. He asked that the courts execute "true judgement." Yet, as we saw in our study of Micah, the courts were in the hands of evil men who used them for their own gain in extorting land and money from the poor and the defenseless.

It seems, looking back across centuries at the iniquities of the courts of another people, that justice for all would have been a matter of simple decency. Yet one cannot but wonder at our own judicial system. Heavy charges have been alleged against our courts to the effect that justice in America is a rich man's commodity. If this be so, we may be assured that the God Who executes judgement over all nations will not allow it to go unnoticed. This is the sort of thing that destroys nations. Whatever else we learn from the captivity of the Jews by Babylon, this is obvious.

The questioners are further reminded that God had, through the former prophets, commanded their fathers to "*show kindness and compassion, every man to his brother; and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the sojourner, nor the poor; and let none devise evil against his brother in your heart.*"

Again these things seem, when viewed objectively, the common customs of any civilized people, particularly a people who claim to be God's people. Yet, as we saw, Micah described in detail the cruel and often violent violation of each of these practices and he had warned their fathers of the consequences.

As in the case of the other evils which brought about Judah's exile to Babylon, American culture today seems fairly riddled with such cruelty. Most any daily newspaper will supply ample illustrations of the truth of this charge.

(Verses 11-14) In these verses Zechariah reviews the response of the pre-exilic nation to the warnings of the prophets, and the consequences of that response. They had hardened their hearts, turned away and refused to listen.

Therefore God's wrath had come, and the people had been driven from the land as chaff is driven before a whirlwind. It was part of

this wrath that had brought about the burning and death which they commemorated by their annual fasts of mourning.

God's first answer to the questions about fasting may be summarized like this: the fasts in question were not ordained of God. The events remembered in the fasts were part of God's just punishment of the wickedness of the people. The people had not only deserved the punishment because of their evil ways, they deserved it doubly because they had refused to hear God's prophets who were sent to call them to repentance and to warn them of what would happen if they failed to repent. Therefore, those who mourned the just punishment of God upon their fathers had best leave off such meaningless ceremonies and themselves heed the teaching of the former prophets.

As James would have it "pure religion and undefiled before our God and father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." (*James 1:27*)

THE THIRD ANSWERING STATEMENT . . . Zechariah 8:1-8

RV . . . And the word of Jehovah of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. Thus saith Jehovah: I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called The city of truth; and the mountain of Jehovah of hosts. The holy mountain. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for every age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in those days; should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith Jehovah of hosts. Thus saith Jehovah 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.

LXX . . . And the word of the Lord Almighty came, saying, Thus saith the Lord Almighty; I have been jealous for Jerusalem and for Sion with great jealousy, and I have been jealous for her with great fury. Thus saith the Lord; I will return to Sion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a true city, and the mountain of the Lord Almighty a holy mountain. Thus saith the Lord Almighty; There shall yet dwell old men and old women in the streets

of Jerusalem, every one holding his staff in his hand for age. And the broad places of the city shall be filled with boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Thus saith the Lord Almighty; If it shall be impossible in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, shall it also be impossible in my sight? saith the Lord Almighty. Thus saith the Lord Almighty; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and the west country; and I will bring them in, and cause them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be to me a people, and I will be to them a God, in truth and in righteousness.

COMMENTS

The *third* statement made by God through Zechariah to the questioners from Beth-el is a statement of His love for His people and a desire that they be happy in the knowledge that He is with them in the land. Such a joyous relationship has no room for fasts, especially not for fasts of human origin.

(Verses 1-2) This is not the only passage of Scripture in which God is said to be jealous. (cp. *Exodus* 20:5, 34:14, *Deuteronomy* 4:24, 5:9, 6:15, *Joshua* 24:19, *Nahum* 1:2) In every one of these passages, God's jealousy is set against the background either of the covenant or the violation of the covenant in the worship of false gods.

Zechariah's statement of Jehovah's jealousy is likewise in the context of the covenant. It is Zion over which He is jealous. It is the restored remnant who marvel at the joys of His return to Jerusalem (*v.* 6). It is Jehovah of hosts who speaks (*v.* 4). The mountain (Zion) of Jehovah is the holy mountain. These are covenant terms.

God's jealousy is the jealousy of a righteous husband for His bride. In more than one passage in the pre-exilic prophets, Israel is presented as Jehovah's bride. (eg. *Isaiah* 49:18, 61:10, 62:5, *Jeremiah* 2:32, 7:34, 16:9, 25:10, 33:11, *Joel* 2:16).

Nor is the idea strange to the New Testament. (eg. *John* 3:29, *Revelation* 18:23, 21:2,9, 22:17) Israel, as presented in the New Testament, is the covenant people consisting of all who by obedient faith are God's people.

In both the Old and New Testaments, idolatry in particular and false worship in general are called harlotry or spiritual adultery. In turning from God to the worship of false gods, Israel played the role of the unfaithful wife. This, as we have previously seen, was the ultimate cause of the evil in the pre-exilic kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and

so the ultimate reason for the destruction of Israel and the captivity of Judah.

(Verses 3-5) Now the punishment of the faithless bride by her jealous husband is over. He has returned her to the homeland. In building the temple she has at last returned in her heart to Him. He will therefore return to live in the house Israel has built for Him. The twin hills, Zion and Moriah upon which Jerusalem and the temple sit are to be known as the holy mountain.

Bear in mind, that which is holy is that which is set apart to the accomplishment of God's purpose. The ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant promise would come when, on this very mountain, God's message of repentance and remission of sins began its call to all the nations of the earth. (cp. *Luke 24:44-ff, Acts, chapter 2*)

The happiness of the restored people in their land with their God is pictured by the prophet in figures of happy homelife. Old men and old women sit in the streets. Those who, because of age must lean upon a staff, go about the city. The streets are full of children at play. It is a picture of happy contented safety on the part of those who trust and obey the Lord and who thereby are aware of His presence in their midst. Long life and many children was, among the Jews, the epitome of the "good life."

(Verse 6) The remnant, having returned to a desolate forsaken land with its buildings all in ruins, would look with amazement upon the restoration.

"Should it also be," Jehovah asks rhetorically, "*marvellous in mine eyes?*" Those who had failed to heed his warnings before the captivity, had also failed to hear His promises of deliverance. Therefore they were astounded that it should come so completely to pass. But to Jehovah, Who from the beginning had planned it so, it was no cause for marvel at all.

(Verses 7-8) The joy of the returnees, and their amazement at what God has wrought through them blends quite normally into a glimpse of the final fulfillment in Messianic Israel. In that day, Jehovah will save His people, not only from Babylon and from among the Jews. His people will come from the east and the west. The presence of God among them will not be symbolic, as in the temple, but in truth and righteousness. Jesus saw this in His own coming. At the Samaritan well He said that the hour was now that true worship would be in spirit and truth rather than in the temple made with hands. (cf. *John 4:23-24*)

THE FOURTH STATEMENT . . . Zechariah 8:9-13

RV . . . Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words from the mouth of the prophets that were in the day that the foundation of the house of Jehovah of hosts was laid, even the temple, that it might be built. For before those days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in, because of the adversary: for I set all men every one against his neighbor. But now I will not be unto the remnant of this people as in the former days, saith Jehovah of hosts. For there shall be the seed of peace; the vine shall give its fruit, and the ground shall give its increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things. And it shall come to pass that, as ye were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing. Fear not, but let your hands be strong.

LXX . . . Thus saith the Lord Almighty; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words out of the mouth of the prophets, from the day that the house of the Lord Almighty was founded, and from the time that the temple was built. For before those days the wages of men could not be profitable, and there could be no hire of cattle, and there could be no peace by reason of the affliction to him that went out or to him that came in: for I would have let loose all men, every one against his neighbour. But now I will not do to the remnant of this people according to the former days, saith the Lord Almighty. But I will shew peace: the vine shall yield her fruit, and the land shall yield her produce, and the heaven shall give its dew: and I will give as an inheritance all these things to the remnant of my people. And it shall come to pass, as ye were a curse among the nations, O house of Juda, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: be of good courage, and strengthen your hands.

COMMENTS

(Verses 9-10) Before the blessed state described in the third statement can become reality the people must get to work with their hands and build the temple. There will be little prosperity in the land until this is accomplished. Their labour will be all in vain and they will be constantly at odds with one another until they have finished the task

the Lord, through His prophets, has set before them. (cp. *Haggai 1:6-11*)

(Verses 11-12) Once the temple has been rebuilt the promised blessed conditions will be forthcoming. God's relationship to the restored remnant will then be different than it is now in their hesitancy to rebuild, different than it has been during the centuries of their rebellion and punishment. Rather than chastisement, He will heap upon them the blessings of the land.

(Verse 13) Again the ecstasy of blessing blends forward into a Messianic prediction. Israel, who have been a curse among the nations shall be saved and become a blessing.

Here, in capsule form, is a statement of God's covenant purpose in the Jewish people. The term "house of Judah" is that from which we derive the term Jew. The term Israel is the term which stresses the covenant relationship of the Jews to Jehovah.

The remnant of the Jewish race has returned to the land promised by God in the establishment of the covenant. As the remainder of the race they have been saved (or will be upon completion of the temple).

The remnant was also the remainder of the covenant people. As such they would be saved in a much greater way with the coming of the Messiah. At that point they would be a blessing.

Here, at the beginning of their restored national life, is the same covenant terminology which has marked every other beginning in the history of this people. In the call of Abraham, when the covenant was voiced for the first time, God had made the promise to him in words identical to these (*Genesis 12:2*). In the same statement, God had made it clear to Abraham that the blessing was intended for the whole human race. (*Genesis 12:3*)

In the soliloquy recorded in *Genesis 18:17-ff*, God reaffirms this covenant purpose in very similar language. (*v. 18*)

To Isaac God spoke similarly, as the covenant passed from the first to the second generation. (*Genesis 26:4*)

When the covenant was reaffirmed to Jacob, the language was the same. (*Genesis 28:14*)

It was this promise that God remembered when He was about to lead Jacob's progeny out of Egypt. (*Exodus 2:24*) The progeny accepted this covenant as the condition upon which they would become a peculiar treasure to Jehovah, and a nation of priests. (*Exodus 19:5-6*)

Now the remnant, upon taking up residence in the land once more, once more becoming a nation of priests in the restored temple, are reminded very pointedly that the reason for their existence has to

do with their relationship to God's purpose in all the nations of the earth.

They had, in time past, become a curse rather than a blessing upon the nations. They had assumed they were special before God merely for their own sakes, and so believed the rest of the world inferior. They had proved unfaithful to God themselves and so thwarted the fulfillment of His purpose to bless all nations through them.

Consequently, ten of the twelve tribes had been wiped out and the remaining people led captive.

* Now, returned from exile and re-established with the symbolic presence of Jehovah in their midst they are not to forget why He has spent all these patient centuries with them. The purpose for which they had been called into being in the beginning is exactly the purpose of their present restoration.

Therefore, because God has more at stake in their work than do they, they are once more called upon to: "*fear not, but let your hands be strong.*" To understand God's purpose in building is to fearlessly build in the strength of the Lord.

THE FIFTH STATEMENT . . . Zechariah 8:14-17

RV . . . For thus saith Jehovah of hosts: As I thought to do evil unto you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I repented not; so again have I thought in these days to do good unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not. These are the things that ye shall do: Speak ye every man the truth with his neighbor; execute the judgement of truth and peace in your gates; and let none of you devise evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith Jehovah.

LXX . . . For thus saith the Lord Almighty; As I took counsel to afflict you when your fathers provoked me, saith the Lord Almighty, and I repented not: so have I prepared and taken counsel in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Juda: be ye of good courage. These are the things which ye shall do; speak truth every one with his neighbour; judge truth and peaceable judgement in your gates: and let none of you devise evil in his heart against his neighbour; and love not a false oath: for all these things I hate, saith the Lord Almighty.

COMMENTS

(Verses 14-15) The *fifth* statement is, in effect, a brief reaffirmation of the first. The fathers, *ie.* those who lived on the other side

of the exile, had provoked Jehovah's wrath. He had determined to punish them and would not be dissuaded.

Now He is equally determined to "start all over again" with the remnant. Just as originally He had intended a blessed and peaceful relationship with Israel in the land of promise while leading them toward the fulfillment of His purpose, so now in the restoration it is His desire to bless the remnant toward the same end.

(Verses 15(c)-17) For this reason they are not to live in fear. God's wrath is neither petulant nor arbitrary. So long as they are faithful and live as He desires they have no reason to fear it.

There can be no doubt as to what will please Him. They must, as the former prophets had entreated their fathers, be honest with each other. They must be just in their judicial proceedings. They must not scheme to take advantage of the weak and poor. They must not go to court with false oaths to accomplish selfish purposes.

The reason is plain. He hates all these things. A righteous God could scarcely do otherwise.

THE SIXTH STATEMENT . . . Zechariah 8:18-23

RV . . . And the word of Jehovah of hosts came unto me, saying, Thus saith Jehovah 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; there love truth and peace. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come peoples, and the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to entreat the favor of Jehovah, and go to seek Jehovah of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, they 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.

LXX . . . And the word of the Lord Almighty came to me, saying, Thus saith the Lord Almighty, The fourth fast, and the fifth fast, and the seventh fast, and the tenth fast, shall be to the house of Juda for joy and gladness, and for good feasts; and ye shall rejoice; and love ye the truth and peace. Thus saith the Lord Almighty; Yet shall many peoples come, and the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of five cities shall come together to one city, saying, Let us go to make

supplication to the Lord, and to seek the face of the Lord Almighty; I will go also. And many peoples and many nations shall come to seek earnestly the face of the Lord Almighty in Jerusalem, and to obtain favour of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord Almighty; In those days my word shall be fulfilled if ten men of all the languages of the nations should take hold—even take hold of the hem of a Jew, saying, We will go with thee; for we have heard that God is with you.

COMMENTS

The *final* statement in answer to the questioners from Beth-el is also the final entreaty of God to the people to build the temple. It begins with a promise of joy in the stead of fasting and closes with a Messianic promise that through His people all the people of earth will come to share His blessings.

(Verses 18-19) The fasts occasioned, albeit without divine sanction, by the punishment of Judah through Babylon will give way to joy and gladness. The fast days themselves will become feast days.

Jewish history provides an ironic footnote concerning these fasts which God promised would become feasts. The fast of the fourth month observed on the 17th of the Hebrew month of *Tammuz*, is now observed in connection with four incidents: (1) the building of the golden calf, (2) Moses' breaking of the tablets of the law, (3) the cessation of daily sacrifices prior to the actual Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem^{bl} and (4) the actual occupation of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

The fast of the fifth month, is held on the 9th day of *Abh* by modern Jewry, in connection with the destruction of Solomon's temple by Nebuchadnezzar and of the second temple on the same day of the year by Titus in 70 A.D. Connected with the modern observance of this fast also is the memory of the day God turned the Israelites back from entering the promised land a year and a half after they left Egypt, and the capture of the city of Bether by Hadrian c. 135 A.D.

The fast of the seventh month, now observed on the third day of *Tisbri* remembers the murder of Gedaliah at Mizpah, just as during the captivity.

The tenth month fast remembers, on the tenth day of *Tibbeth*, as it did in Babylon, the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

From this it would seem that the Jews have missed the joy of their

deliverance from captivity, just as in rejecting Jesus they have missed the joy of their deliverance from sin.

One is constrained to believe that Zechariah's picture of joy in this passage, as others, is symbolic of the joy of salvation in Christ rather than of any joy on the part of those who seem forever blind to the blessings of Jehovah.

(Verses 20-2) The Messianic age will come. People of many nations will join the faithful of Israel in the enjoyment of God's blessings. The passage is a perfect picture of what is happening as the influence of the church, beginning in Jerusalem, has brought to the world the Jehovah once known only to the Jews.

These verses are very reminiscent of *Isaiah 2:4*, and of *Joel 2:28-ff.* If by them we are to understand material promises, then history fails to record their fulfillment. If, on the other hand, these verses, and other such prophetic passages are symbolic of the real blessings of Jehovah for His people in the Messianic age, we have but to count our blessings as Christians to know the real meaning of these verses. Personally, I believe the latter to be the intent of the passage.

What God began in the Spirit will not be perfected in the flesh (cp. *Galatians 3:3*). God's purpose has always been to bless the peoples of the whole earth. When the temple is completed and the symbolic priesthood and sacrifices restored, the final barrier to Messiah's coming will have been removed. When He comes, men from every nation under heaven will seek the God of Israel. The faithful remnant would become the nucleus of the Messiah's true Israel, and as they went everywhere from Jerusalem preaching the Gospel, men of every nation would turn to them for knowledge of the one true God.

Chapter XXXVI—Questions

Teaching About Worship

1. Outward formal religious observances unrelated to present life are an _____ to _____.
2. God's promises are to those whose relationship to Him makes a real difference in _____.
3. On December 4, _____ B.C. those who lived in Beth-el sent messengers to Jehovah with a question.
4. What was that question?
5. Where is Beth-el?

Z E C H A R I A H

6. Show that those who lived in Beth-el were not Samaritans but Jews.
7. The fast on the seventh day of the fifth month marked the _____ anniversary of _____.
8. The fast of the seventh Month remembered _____.
9. Zechariah's answer to the question from Beth-el was in _____ statements.
10. Give the references for each of these statements.
11. What was the first answer?
12. Who were "the former prophets?"
13. What was the second answer?
14. The questioners are further reminded that God, through the former prophets, had commanded their fathers to "_____".
18. The happiness of the restored people is presented in figures of happy _____.
19. The joy and amazement of the returnees blends quite normally into a glimpse of _____.
20. What is Zechariah's fourth answering statement?
21. Again the ecstasy of blessing blends forward into _____ prediction.
22. At the beginning of their restored national life is the same _____ terminology which had marked the beginning of _____.
23. The returned remnant is once more to be a nation of _____.
24. How had the Jews become a curse upon the nations rather than a blessing?
25. Discuss the idea that "God has more at stake in this work than do they."
26. What was the fifth statement in answer to the questioners from Beth-el?
27. How does it relate to the first statement?
28. So; long as the people are _____ and _____ they have no reason to fear God's wrath.
29. What was the sixth statement?
30. This statement is also an entreaty to God's people to _____.
31. It begins with a promise of _____ instead of _____ and closes with a _____ promise.

PREFACE TO SECTION II

32. Modern Jews observe the fast of the fourth month in connection with _____, _____, _____, and _____.
33. The fast of the fifth month is held in connection with _____, and _____. It also remembers _____ and _____.
34. The fast of the seventh month is now observed in remembrance of _____.
35. The tenth month fast recalls _____.
36. What do you conclude from the fact that these fasts are still observed by the Jews?
37. Verses 20-23 are a perfect picture of what is happening as the influence of the _____, beginning at _____ has brought the world the _____ once known only to the Jews.

CHAPTER XXXVII

PREFACE TO SECTION II

The opening verse of Zechariah, chapter nine, marks the beginning of the truly apocalyptic section of the prophet's work. As has been previously indicated, the probable reason for the shift to this style of writing is to avoid a confrontation with the Medo-Persian authorities. We shall see that, in this last six chapters, Zechariah makes predictions which, if written literally, would have brought the wrath of an otherwise benevolent Darius down upon Judah perhaps to her permanent destruction. Daniel, written during the Babylonian captivity, and Revelation, written during the heat of Roman persecution are two further examples among others in the Bible of the use of apocalypsis in writing predictive prophecy for the purpose of protecting the readers.

Because of the sudden shift in style of writing between this and the first section of the book, the form critics of the Bible have had a field day with Zechariah. Their attacks have centered largely upon the date of writing and the identity of the author.

It is not within the scope of this work to answer these critics, except to say that there is no solid evidence, either internal or external to deny its place as part of the message of Zechariah. The sudden change in style is brought about by the content of the predictions. The change in subject matter is occasioned by the fact that, unlike the