



Truth for Today

June 14, 2020

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Dispense True Justice

by Don Hooton

Zechariah 7 describes a period after Jerusalem had fallen, after captives had been carried to Babylon and now, after Judah has returned to Palestine. Rebuilding the city and the Temple has begun and in about two more years, it will be complete. A delegation from the city of Bethel has come to the priests and prophets in Jerusalem to seek the Lord's favor and ask – what seems like a perfectly logical question – should we continue on with the fasts of recent generations: the fast of the fifth (7:3), the seventh (7:5), the fourth and the tenth months (8:19), all related to Jerusalem's fall in 586 B.C. In the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem; in the fourth, he penetrated the city; in the fifth, the temple was burned; and, in the seventh, Gedaliah, the Jewish governor, was assassinated and the remnant fled (see 2 Kings 25). For nearly 70 years, Jews observed these dates as fasts. But now, with the Temple going up and Jerusalem being rebuilt, they wondered if there was any need to continue.

In his answer Zechariah points out (7:5) that because of their hard hearts (7:12), the Lord had scattered their ancestors to Babylon and warned that they too were showing similar problems. While God promised His great work to bring Messiah and restore the remnant Israel to the place of peace (8:9-17), He warned them against repeating the past's focus on the outward to save themselves (7:6) rather than the Lord.

The first lesson is that when we focus on rules and rituals, particularly those made by men, we are concerned about things God did not command while we neglect the things God has. While He had not commanded their fasts, He had ordained one: the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27). Their fasting on days to confess sin and pray for national restoration was not wrong but God had never ordained them. However, He had commanded them to "do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with [their] God" (Micah 6:8). In Zechariah, He is precise: "Dispense true justice, and practice kindness and compassion for each to his brother; and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another" (7:9-10).

"Dispense true justice" (7:9-10). Rather than repentance, Judah had started fasts to remind themselves of events caused by their sin. It was an outward show with little inward renewal. As a nation of individuals, they should have repented of the sin leveled by God against them. And what was that sin? In Zechariah's words, it was their failures of true justice, kindness and compassion (7:9-10). While idolatry and the infringement of the Mosaic covenant was a cause for their judgment (2Kings 17:7-23), Zechariah says that it was also their abandonment of human brotherhood with the defenseless and devising evil against each other. They asked if they needed to keep fasts they had devised while feeling good about their continued dodge of God's clear interpersonal instructions for the care for the poor, the stranger (i.e. immigrant), the orphan and the widow.

While now in American streets, a cultural war rages over prejudice and racism, over the immoral and illegal actions of some police officers, and riotous people who destroy and make mayhem, what should churches do? What should Americans do? Should we continue on without reflection and still miss the point of what has caused the whole explosion in our culture? Even today, any nation – and especially the people of God, the church – are commanded this same brotherly love for all people (do I need to reference the many Scriptures here?). While Christians certainly must keep and maintain the essential biblical customs Paul demanded of churches (2Thessalonians 2:15), we cannot avoid the weightier matters of the Law, like "justice and mercy and faithfulness" (Matthew 23:23).

Even in the context of Zechariah, Judah had the "religious" system down and had gotten the "motions" going. But they were oblivious to their hearts. They had based their fellowship with God on the mechanical or outward and not – the real heart to be shaped by the word from God. Zechariah called then out in their failings to "dispense true justice" (7:9-10). We too, while still distinguishing between custom and Divine Law (Mark 7:1ff), must equally demand of ourselves everything God expects of us for the powerless among us. Outward religion without the inward heart shaped by God's teaching will lead to further hardening of the heart.

This isn't just about social justice; it's true justice. While people who kill and people who cause mayhem should pay the penalty, so should people who mistreat the powerless. God held the whole nation accountable for it – and placed it as the equal plane of guilt for their expulsion from their homeland.

As disciples we must work to reach the powerless with the gospel. How can they hear without the gospel? How can they hear through voices of prejudice and oppression? The Saved should be reaching out to The Lost – not just to those who look like, talk like, walk like or really "anything" like us. Paul went to pagans who were nothing like him because his own heart had been transformed by the good news of God. Churches should look like Heaven. Heaven will not be white or Anglo-Saxon. Heaven will be a perfect blending of every color God made in all the people God saved; churches should also.

We may say, "But we have racial equality." Do we? This isn't simply saying that we "love" while we fail to show kindness and compassion to {every} brother especially in times like these. People who put down others because of their ethnicity, skin color – and even their economic place – do not know God's real heart for the underprivileged, the very ones our society has tried to make invisible because it makes us uncomfortable and reminds us what our forefathers in oppression have done. God's people should stand up – in every generation – against all ungodliness.

We can celebrate our "months" – or – we can really change and "dispense true justice."

NEWS & NOTES

UPDATED PRAYER LIST

- **Linda Faughn's** recovery from her procedure.
- **Harvey Goble's** recovery from his procedure.
- **Doug Hall** is doing some better.
- **Mitch Harvey** is scheduled for an ablation on July 15th.
- Several of our senior members who are confined in their senior home and still unable to get out are feeling blue and would love your prayers, cards and calls: **the Halls, Bill Hooton, Linda Peterson, the Yaws**
- **Erin Dulin's** mother healing from a fall.
- Ed Brand, along with his wife Pat, who live in Russellville, Alabama (whom we support), is COVID-19 positive and quarantined.
- Bill Schaible's wife, friends of the Hootons and Arrants, had a quadruple bypass in Prescott, AZ on Thursday morning, and is in ICU.
- **ECONOMIC CHALLENGES.** There are still some of our church family who have had pay-cuts, furloughs, and job loss. Please let the elders know. There are many who are ready to help. There are some who are presently concerned and are asking for prayers: Amanda Allison's husband Jamie and Noelle Davis No doubt there are others.
- **PRAY FOR PEACE.** There is much unrest and much hurt and hatred in our society. It is frightening for many and there are many civil servants, and private citizens, putting themselves in harm's way to keep peace. There are also many people hurting as evidenced by what caused the protests that were peaceful. You can make a difference by loving all of them, listening to them and embracing them. Love everyone and pray for everyone.

—See *Enews for Ongoing Prayer List*

MEETINGS, EVENTS, SINGINGS & STUDIES

- Sunday Worship Assemblies

- Reserved seating for members and those who regularly attend with us. Please contact an elder if there is any change planned in upcoming weeks: if you 1) will be out of town, 2) are changing your time slot (from last Sunday) or, 3) if you will have more than your family.
- KIDzONLY Summer BIBLE CLASSES | LiveStream Sundays, 8:00 a.m.
- TEEN Summer BIBLE CLASS | Zoom Sundays, 2:30 p.m.
- Summer ADULT CLASSES
 - *Songs Outside The Psalter* | LiveStream Sundays, 1:30 p.m.
 - *Psalm 119 | The Psalm of the Word* | LiveStream Wednesdays, 6:00 p.m.
- BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES | (ZOOM, 7/5)
- 2:52 Kids Class [2-12] | (TBA)
- TEENS STUDY [13-18] | (TBA)
- YOUNG ADULTS | (TBA)
- TEEN DEVO [12-18] | (TBA)
- ADULT STUDY [30/40] | (TBA)
- BARNABAS GROUP | See Leo Betancourt
- VBS | THE OVERCOMERS | M-Th., 6/22-25
 - **Registration is nearly to capacity!** Register today!
- WORKDAY | 8/1, 8-10 am
- YOUTH LECTURES | with *Caleb Churchill and Andy Harrison* | Sat-Sun, 8/8-9
- MEETING with *Ben Hall* | 9/13-16
- WOMEN'S DAY with *Sarah Sanford Lyon* | 10/10
- MEN'S DAY with *David McClister* | 11/7

DIRECTORY UPDATES

- The most recent printed directory is in the foyer for members. Changes? See Brian Clark for any corrections or changes.
- **We would like all families** to update their information and ALL worship leaders to do the same. If you have any questions about

the DIRECTORY application of our website, *be sure to see Brian Clark.*

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

- **VOLUNTEER SIGN UPS for 2020**, including Communion Prep, visitor greeting and bi-monthly building lockup.
- **WOULD YOU TEACH?** John Beighle is looking for teachers for the fall quarter (Sept-Nov). Email or text him if you would like to teach.
- **HOSPITALITY?** For the next six months, **Marissa Suarez** has volunteered to coordinate food for members who need assistance during an extended recovery period. Please offer your help!
- See **Leo Betancourt** about getting involved in encouraging our visitors and members in the Barnabas Group.

WEEKLY BIBLE READING

- **Week Twenty-Three** (beginning 6/14)
 - Read Psalm 23, 73, 123
 - Memorize Psalm 23:1-6
 - **Signup for weekly reminders at** <https://www.remind.com/join/>

Attendance	InPerson Average Last-Month	Virtual Average Last-Month	InPerson Last Week	Virtual Views Last Week
<i>KidzOnly Bible Class</i>	n/a	14	n/a	2
<i>High School ZOOM</i>	n/a	13	n/a	10
<i>Sunday Adult Class</i>	n/a	14	n/a	4
<i>Sunday Worship AM</i>	100	85	125	48
<i>Sunday Worship PM</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Wednesday PM</i>	n/a	29	n/a	18

NEXT WEEK'S SERVICE & WORSHIP ASSIGNMENTS	8:30 AM June 21	10:00 AM June 21	Contact Information
<i>Communion Preparation</i>	George & LouAnn C.	George & LouAnn C.	Elders
<i>Sound Booth</i>	Chris L.	Chris L.	Keith Arrants 936.582.1244
<i>Foyer 1/Greeting</i>	Craig P.	Dwight H.	George Chapman 281.298.1303
<i>Foyer 2/Usher</i>	John B.	N. Shows	Norman Davis 832.326.2966
<i>SongLeading</i>	Adam B.	Dwight H.	Don Hooton 936.443.6230
<i>1st Prayer</i>	John B.	Barrett B.	Deacons
<i>Scripture Reading</i>	Ross R.—1Jn 1:5-10	Al S.—Heb 4:1-3,11-16	John Beighle 806.367.3389
<i>Communion</i>	Brian C.	Jeremy C.	Adam Bohanan 281.798.1093
<i>Bread</i>	n/a	n/a	Brian Clark 281.513.0706
<i>Fruit of Vine</i>	n/a	n/a	Gary LeBlanc 281.292.0262
<i>Contribution</i>	n/a	n/a	Craig Preuss 832.477.0578
<i>Assist</i>	n/a	n/a	Evangelists
<i>Assist</i>	n/a	n/a	Don Hooton 936.443.6230
<i>Preaching</i>	Don H.	Don H.	Website
<i>2nd Prayer</i>	Mitch H.	Hayden C.	www.woodlandschurchofchrist.org
<i>Announcements</i>	Jay D.	Don H.	Office Phone
<i>InterService Clean—Foyer/Bath</i>	Leo & Jaque B.	Al & Marissa S.	281.367.2099
<i>InterService Clean—Auditorium</i>	Willie & Rita R.	Cecelia N.	Church Email
<i>Doors Open @8 Lockup @11:30</i>	Adam B.	Don H.	woodlandschurchofchrist@gmail.com