Zechariah 7

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Date: 01 November 2026

Preacher: Ray Kelly

[0:00] I need to give a correction for two weeks ago. Two weeks ago we read about some people, one of whom was called Tobiah, and there were three of them.

In fact, if we open our Bibles to chapter 6 of Zechariah, you might as well see it for yourself. And if we go to chapter 6, and we started that particular sermon, actually it was last time, not the time before, the word of the Lord also came to me saying, take an offering from the exiles from Heldai, Tobiah, and Jediah.
Now the correction is that I said that all of them were priests. And at the first superficial reading, they are all priests, except that a member of our congregation pointed out to me that I had completely overlooked something.
And that someone is going to hate me for naming her. But I thank God for her because she keeps our nose to the scriptures in the right way.
And that's Linda. And she spotted that actually in the book of Ezra, there is a list of priests. And there's also a list of people who put themselves forward as priests, but were then told no, because you couldn't prove your genealogy.
[1:23] And priests always have to prove where they came from. So Tobiah wasn't a priest, which leads us to the question, well, why was he there then? Because they were all engaged in a priestly function.

The truth of this is, I haven't a clue. Except possibly, possibly, Ezra and Zechariah and Haggai were all contemporaries.
And it's possible that he was there acting as a priest before he got found out. But that's purely conjecture on my part. Anyway, just in case you would be misled, I thought I'd clarify that.
Thank you, Linda, for holding us to a high standard. So we're now going to deal with chapter 7 and next week, chapter 8. And these two chapters represent the next part of the book of Zechariah.
So we had part one was the first six verses. Part two was the rest of the next six chapters. Then we've got two chapters that talk about, well, prophecies concerning the conduct of Israel.
[2:32] And then from chapter 9 to the end is all end time stuff. And it gets, I think, quite exciting. It's been exciting for me thus far.

But it gets even more exciting when you realise what the end times contain. So we're at the end of the eight visions that he had in a single night. And this culminated in the drama that we read about last time.
And the fact that there is going to be a temple that the Lord himself will build and that people will come from all over the world bringing their riches to assist that building.
And so there's not a lot more to say unless I spend a lot of time revisiting that. But this chapter, we'll read chapter 7 and then we'll dissect it a bit.
It starts with, In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev.
[3:44] Now the town of Bethel had sent Shereza and Regimelech and their men to seek the favour of the Lord. Speaking to the priests who belong to the house of the Lord and to the prophets saying, Shall I weep in the fifth month and abstain as I have done these many years?

Now I'm going to stop there and I'm going to deal with this book in sections or this chapter in sections, because I think if you read it all, you tend to, it's hard to hold on to some of the key bits and pieces.
And it stops me getting confused, in theory at least. So this is taking place in the fourth year of King Darius.

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Now, Zechariah has been quite meticulous about dating things. And the last time we saw a date was at the beginning of the visions.
And before that, at the beginning of chapter 1. So if you go back to chapter 1, it starts with, In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah.
[4:54] And then on verse 7, on the 24th day of the 11th month, which is the month of Shabbat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah.

That takes us through basically six chapters of scripture. And then we come to this new date, the fourth year of King Darius. So we know from the date we've just read, and, sorry, the previous date we read, and then this date, that these events, these words that came to Zechariah were about two years apart.
It also puts us approximately halfway through the building program that they're building the temple. And if you just briefly flip over to Ezra, and chapter 6, Ezra being quite a small book, it's quite easy to overlook it and have to search hard for it.
So go to Ezra, it's after the books of Chronicles, Ezra chapter 6, and verse, just verse 15. The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar.
It was the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. So this is roughly two years and three months from when the building of the temple is completed. And it's approximately halfway through the process that started at the beginning of the book of Zechariah.
[6:25] That just gives us a time frame in which to place this. And this particular prophecy, if you turn back to Zechariah, the prophecy's been provoked by a visit from Bethel.

So the name Bethel, Bethel is a town 10 to 12 miles north of Jerusalem. A town that was once called Luz.
And it was renamed Bethel after Jacob had the vision there and then made a covenant with God there. And so the name Luz meant simply almond tree, but Bethel means the house of God.
Where you see, I'm not sure whether it should be Bethel or Bethel, because they don't tend to, sorry? Bethel, yeah. The Hebrews don't tend to pronounce the THs.
But we're not Hebrews, so. But for instance, Bethlehem, Bethlehem is the house of bread. This is Bethel, the house of God.
[7:35] And they'd come from this town and been sent from this town, it says, to seek the favour of the Lord. This is verse 2. And they had sent Shereza and Regimelech.

Shereza, I think, is prefect of the treasury. And Regimelech is the king's messenger. So these two dignitaries, but it also says, and their men, so they weren't alone.
They came mob-handed, there was a crowd of them, turned up to seek the favour of the Lord. It seems the reason for their visits, we read it, they wanted to speak to the priests who belonged to the house of the Lord of Hosts and to the prophets.
Well, the priests were people like Josiah and Joshua, the high priest. But the prophets were, or at least contained, Haggai and Zechariah.
They're the ones that appear in scripture. There may have been other prophets about, I don't know. But he'd come to ask their advice. And the advice that was asked was, Shall I weep in the fifth month and abstain as I have done these many years?
[8:57] Now, I think this puts us in territory with which we can become familiar, because what we're going to read about is rituals that are brought into religious practice by men that God never asked for, God doesn't support, God doesn't put his name to.

And in fact, we live in a country that is full of churches that do this. And if we closely examine ourselves, we might find that we're also vulnerable to it. It's when people decide that they're going to do things a particular way, as though God had said that's the way to do it.
And it transpires that God is either completely disinterested in it, or sometimes actively against it. So, for instance, the ritual of elevating Mary to the position of deity in the Roman Catholic Church, that's something that God is vehemently against.
There's a ritual that's been there for centuries of what they call Maryolatry, worship of Mary, or veneration of Mary, when Mary herself said that Jesus was her saviour.
So, she didn't pretend to be anything divine, but this tradition has sprung up that's been honoured for centuries. And there will be others if we look for them, and this morning isn't about looking for, it's not about going on a witch hunt, despite the fact that it's the time of year that it is.

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[10:25] It's simply recognising that we can, sometimes with the best of intentions, finish up with rituals that we bring into church that don't belong in church.

Now, these guys have said, should I abstain? What are their exact words? Shall I weep in the fifth month and abstain as I have done these many years?
So, the reason these guys were here was that when the temple was burnt during the time of Solomon, 70 years plus before this event, in fact, it was more like 90 years by this stage, but they'd been right through the captivity, but before they went into captivity, the temple was burned and destroyed.
And so, these guys decided to memorialise that. Like we have our day when we memorialise the end of the Second World War and things like that.
These guys had memorialised the burning of the temple, which comes at a well-known time in Jewish life called Tosh Bar-Av.
[11:42] And that time is the time when the temple was burnt, but there's also a time when lots of other strange and rather nasty things happened in Israel. It's a time when they kind of realised that they had it rough.

I'm not going to go through a list of what was done, but there are five or six things that certainly took place at Tosh Bar-Av, and one of those was the destruction of the temple. And so, they memorialised this day.
This is the day we lost the temple. So, they're asking, should we keep this ritual going, is their question. Right?
Shall I weep in the fifth month and abstain as I have done these many years? And when you think about it, the only reason they lost the temple in the first place was because of their sin. So, they were memorialising the loss of the temple, but they weren't memorialising their sinful contribution to that event.
They weren't recognising their own role in the fact that they lost the temple. More of this in a moment. So, let's read on a bit. Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me saying, say to all the people of the land, so not just to these guys who presented themselves to the priests, but to all the people of the land.
[12:58] Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, when you fasted and mourned in the fifth and the seventh months, these 70 years, was it actually for me that you feasted, or fasted rather?

When you eat and drink, do you not eat for yourselves? Do you not drink for yourselves? Are not these words which the Lord proclaimed by the former prophets?
When Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous, along with the cities around it, and the Negev and the foothills were inhabited. So, let's pause there. So, they've asked their question, and Zechariah wants to come up with an answer.
Now, let's just clarify what this is about. Turn to 2 Kings 25, and we're going to pick a few bits out of here because you will notice that the prophet here, God speaking through the prophet, has basically said, you're not only doing this on the fifth month, but you're doing it on the seventh month also.
So, there's been some extra information, and what this does is it puts an emphasis on the fact that they were engaged in rituals that were, at the very best, God was indifferent to, and at worst, God would perhaps not even want them doing.
[14:22] Now, notice that as we go through this chapter and as we go through the next chapter, at no point does God give them a direct answer to these questions. He doesn't say, yeah, keep it going, or no, no, no, stop it.

What he does is he addresses their hearts as if he's saying, it's not your rituals that matter, it's what you're like that matters.
So, what did I send you to? 2 Kings 25, verses 8 and 9 to begin with. So, on the seventh day of the fifth month, which was the 19th year of King Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, the captain of the guard and servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.
He burned the house of the Lord, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and even every great house he burned with fire. So, that just nails for you when that happened, and this is why they're memorializing something in the fifth month.
But if we then go on down to verse 22, same chapter, verse 22, you've got this reference to a man called Gedaliah.

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[15:41] Now, as for the people who were left in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had left, he appointed Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, over them.

So, this chap, now, what they've done here, well, let me read on a bit. When all the captains of the forces, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah, governor, they came to Gedaliah, to Mishpat, namely Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah and Jonathan, the son of Cariah, and Sarai, the son of Tahumeth, the Netophathite, this is not a good passage when you're really tired, the Netophathite, and Jezaniah, the son of the Makkahite, they and their men, Gedaliah, swore to them and their men and said to them, do not be afraid of the servants of the Chaldeans, live in the land and serve the king of Babylon, it will be well with you.
But it came about in the seventh month that Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishamah, of the royal family, came with ten men and struck Gedaliah down so that he died along with the Jews and the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah.
So, this man Gedaliah was killed in the seventh month and what this passage referred to is that they had also memorialized his death.
But what have we just read about this man? That he was put in place as the governor of what was left. When Israel was taken into captivity, some of them were given the opportunity to stay behind and Jeremiah was one of those people who was given leave to stay behind if he wanted to and he chose to stay behind.
[17:38] So, people will say, you may have heard this on the news, that when people are defending Israel at the moment, they say, there has always been a Jewish presence in Israel.

Now, although the Hebrews were taken into captivity at this time, there was still a Jewish presence in Israel. Israel. And so, when they left some of these Jews behind, instead of them naturally being governed by their own royals, the government of Nebuchadnezzar put in place a governor and that governor, as we've just read, said, it's okay, follow the priests of Babylon, all will be fine.
So, this is not someone the Lord would sanction and it's not someone the Lord would want them memorializing. In fact, more likely, the Lord would prefer that their names were struck from the record other than just for the sake of knowing the history.
So, they'd memorialized the death of Gedaliah and the destruction of the temple and they'd been not only weeping, now this is something that I don't know of other nations that do this, but you know Jerusalem has a wailing wall and people go there and they wail, they weep.
And from what I've heard, I've not been there and witnessed it myself, but from what I've heard, it's very real, as there are real tears, but they're manufactured. I was amazed when actors can do this, when they can just produce tears on command.
[19:16] But, there is this, well, this is so sad, we should be weeping over it, so let's weep. And so, they would force themselves to weep. So, was this sincere sorrow?

It's difficult to tell is the truth. For some, probably it was. For many, it certainly wasn't. It was just something we do, because that's what we do in the fifth and the seventh months of every year, is we cry over these events.
So, and they not only would cry, but they would fast, hence the reference to abstaining. Should I carry on weeping and should I abstain?
Abstaining simply means fasting, abstaining from food. There was only one fast that God ever required, and that was on the Day of Atonement.
So, if you're manufacturing a day of fasting in their community, you do it not because God has asked for it, but because you want to do it.
[20:19] You want to add, you want to add magnitude and impetus to the day that you've chosen to memorialize these events. And yet, God never ever required fasting other than on the Day of Atonement.

So, now we, now we need to deal with, go back to Zechariah, we need to deal with the response that God brought, and I find myself continually having to say not that, not that Zechariah said it, but that God said it through Zechariah, because he was the mouthpiece of God when he was speaking.
And so, what we read in verse 4, the word of the Lord, Yahweh, the Lord of hosts, came to me saying, say to all the people of the land and to the priests, so he wants everybody to get this, not just the people who turned up asking the question, but he wants the whole of Israel, the whole of the land to understand what is about to be said.

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When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months, these 70 years, was it actually for me that you fasted? And so, he's answered the question with a question.
You know, shall we keep weeping? Shall we keep fasting? Well, when you did it, did you actually do it for me? The Lord said. And it's a rhetorical question because the obvious answer is no.
[21:53] And he goes on and talks about not only their eating, but their fasting. When you eat and drink, do you eat, sorry, they're feasting. When you eat and drink, do you eat for yourselves and do you not drink for yourselves?

Are these the words, sorry, sorry, read that again. Are not these the words which the Lord proclaimed by the former prophets when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous along with its cities around it and the Negev and the foothills were inhabited?
So, he's obviously referring back to the time of Solomon when Israel was in its heyday, when they were prosperous, when there was a lot of people in Jerusalem and in Israel and in the foothills and even in the Negev there was a lot of population.
So, this was the time before they were taken into captivity. And what the prophet says here, what the Lord says through the prophet is, you have this time of plenty and you were already instructed about the way you were handling rituals and your religious practices.
But what you were doing was insincere. Now, there are several examples of what he might have been referring to. If you take Isaiah chapter 1 and we just read from verses 12 to 20, the Lord says this through the prophet Isaiah, when you come to appear before me, who requires of you this trampling of my courts?
[23:31] Bring your worthless offerings no longer. Incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies. I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.

So, he's pointing out that there's a mixture here. There's iniquity and the solemn assembly. Therefore, the solemn assembly is insincere and wrong. It's not actually a true solemn assembly before God.
It's putting on a show of righteousness and solemnity. it isn't actually being righteous and solemn. Carry on verse 14.
I hate your new moon festivals and your approved feasts. They have become a burden to me. I am weary of bearing them.
So, when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you. Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.
[24:32] Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean, remove the evil of your deeds from my sight, cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.
If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land, but if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword. Truly the mouth of the Lord has spoken.
So, Zechariah is pointing out really that it's all been said before. You've been here before. You've been told again and again and again, I do not want empty rituals.
You will find a very similar reading if you went to Jeremiah 7 verses 1 to 11. And even in the early part of this prophecy, if you go to chapter 1, Zechariah chapter 1, verse 4, he said, do not be like your fathers to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying, thus says the Lord of hosts, return now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds, but they did not listen or give heed to me, declares the Lord.
[25:56] So what the prophet is saying in answer to these questions is, you're not listening. You've been told all this before.

You're just not listening. And with that comes an imperative that we do listen.
You see, we live in a nation, particularly the church part of the nation, that quite often takes the word of the Lord and ignores it. Now, the word of the Lord says, for example, that homosexuality is a sin.
And the church says, ah, don't worry about that. The word of God says God hates divorce, and yet we don't treat divorce seriously.
And the church is one of, I mean, the rate of divorce within the church is at least as bad as outside the church. And there are some statistics that suggest it's slightly worse. So we haven't taken

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seriously the word of the Lord about divorce.
[27:04] Now, I don't say this in any way to pump myself up, but when Sharon and I first came to the Lord, our marriage was in tatters, and we had actively considered divorce.

And we both read independently in the Bible that God hates divorce. And it left us not knowing what on earth to do. We've proved we can't make this marriage work, but now we read that God hates divorce.
So what are we supposed to do with that? And the first prayer we ever prayed together was for our marriage, because we didn't have a solution. But of course, at that point, we didn't have anybody saying to us, no, no, no, no, no, you can't get divorced.
We were blessed to have found our way through it without that kind of influence. But the church is not saying that at the moment, which is deeply, deeply sad.
So I think the point here that Zechariah is on behalf of the Lord, he's taking to the people is you need to listen. You don't need to go and do what your father's before you have done.
[28:17] the verses we read, they all address this particular trait of apparent religious observance.

We do all the right things. The smells and the bells are there. We're carrying out the right ritual. And in the real world, living hypocritical lives, sinful hearts trying to look good.
And so there's lying, there's cheating, there's the committing of adultery, there's the worship of other gods. And I don't know, one could get into a whole study of its own about the big religious churches, Roman Catholicism, Church of England, and so on, as to what extent their worship is based on idolatry.
But even pushing that aside, there are things in the life of our nation that have elevated themselves to the point almost of worship, where we will defend them and defend them and defend them, things like abortion.
You know, we really, really, as a nation, I'm not saying that people in this room defend abortion, but as a nation we do. It thrills me to know that Abby and Amanda, and there may be others, go along to these sessions that are promoting life and discouraging abortion, because that's exactly what we should be doing.
[29:49] But it's what the church at large should be doing, and it isn't. And when you get to verse 7 in Zechariah, you can almost imagine the prophet saying, look, you've got Bibles, you know your own history, you already know the answer to this, you don't need to make a 10-mile trek to get me, and I'm presuming possibly wrongly that they'd come to get approval for what they wanted to do.

And there was an element of piety about it, you know. We do this fasting and praying, you know, we do it every year to memorialize the dreadful events that led to the downfall of the temple.
And this man, Gadaliah, who incidentally was going against the will of God anyway, but, you know, we do this, aren't we good? And the prophet's saying, it's empty. It has no real substance to it.
So, the mourning and weeping was over events that had made them sad, but all of those events had been brought about by their own sin. Now, whether it was these particular men and their sin is debatable because it was like they first went into captivity 70 years ago plus.
But what there wasn't in the question was any contrition for the sin. It was, should we carry on the ritual or not? There was no recognition of, my goodness, we must have got right up God's nose.
[31:21] We were so sinful. And the fasting that they did, they were fasting because of their loss, because they'd lost the temple, because they'd lost Gadariah, Gadariah, Gadariah.

But there was no sense of we're fasting because we've been estranged from God, because our sin has driven a wedge between us and God. And what I think we're supposed to get from this prophecy is a heartache for righteousness.
Not only for ourselves, I mean, yes, for ourselves because I can't speak for you, but when I fall into sin, it eats me up. I hate it. And it happens to all of us.
But nationally when we fall into sin, when we do the crazy things that we're currently doing, we need to be upset about that, not any material stuff that we've lost.
And of course, as we said, he addresses their feasting as well as their fasting. Now, of course, they have feast days, don't they? They have one day where a fast is required and seven days where feasting is required.
[32:36] But the idea of the feasting is that it's to enjoy the provision of God and to lift God on high and for God to be the center of the feast. And what he's saying is, you know, are you, when you eat, are you eating for me or for you?

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When you drink, is that for me or for you? And what he's saying is, you're leaving me out. You're leaving me out of, in your rituals, the fact that you've ritualized it means God gets left out and it becomes, anybody who listens online, excuse the way I'll put this, but it becomes stuffing your face with a righteous label on it.
And it's not supposed to be that. Very much redolent of our Christmas, by the way. where Christmas comes along, Jesus was born, all the stables and the nativity scenes appear, and there is more of the stuff that God hates done at Christmas than at any other time of the year.
So, it's very much, oh, we've got this festival, shall we continue? Do you know, I think, I think if the Lord was here, and we said, should we continue with Christmas?
He'd probably say, no, because it's become something that I can have nothing to do with, because it is so full of sin. Now, obviously, our own individual celebrations at Christmas don't have to be filled with sin, but what we do as a nation, when you think we are a nation that used to take the gospel to the whole world, it is incredibly sad that Christmas has become full of drunkenness, debauchery of one sort or another, gluttony, inebriation.
[34:30] So, and all the while he's saying, you've been told this before, you've been told it before. Turn with me to Amos, the book of Amos.

Amos chapter 5 was written before they were sent into captivity. And if we just read verses 21, so this is Amos 5 verses 21 to 27, what we will see is the reason why they were sent into captivity.
And the Lord says through Amos, I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, and I will not even look at the peace offering of your fatlings.
Take away from me the noise of your songs. I will not even listen to the sound of your harps, but let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.
Did you ever present me, sorry, did you present me with sacrifices and grain offerings in the wilderness for forty years, O house of Israel? You also carried along Sikuth and your king Kion.
[35:50] Now Sikuth and Kion, they are pagan deities. I'll find out which ones they are in a second because I can't remember. I'll come back to it.

But one of them is Saturn. They used to worship Saturn as a pagan god. And I can't remember what the other one was. But what he's saying is, you've come to worship me and you've brought these with you.
What's that all about? I'm supposed to share a stage with these pagan gods that don't even actually exist. Molech, that's the one. That's the name that wouldn't come to my head.
So we've got them worshipping the Lord as well as Molech, which is the god to whom they sacrifice children. And Saturn, a star that God put in the sky.
And he does say, doesn't he, the Lord. In another place, he says that he is a jealous God and he will not share his glory with another. So, in fact, I've just found it in my notes.
[36:53] I'd overlooked it. So what God was saying through Zechariah is that nothing's changed. Your rituals are still empty and false. You were thrown into captivity for stuff that you are still doing by still having these times of weeping, which was obviously false because you had to manufacture it on the day, and fasting, you've not learned.

You're doing what your forefathers have always done. If we turn to Malachi chapter 1, so Malachi is immediately before Matthew, and just verses 6 to 8, a son honours his father, and a servant his master.
Then if I am a father, where is my honour? And if I am a master, where is my respect, says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name?
But you say, how have we despised your name? You are presenting defiled food upon my altar, but you say, how have we defiled you in that? You say, the table of the Lord is not to be despised.
But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you?
[38:21] Or would he receive you kindly, says the Lord of hosts? But now will you not entreat God's favour that he may be gracious to us with such an offering on your part?

Will he receive any of you kindly, says the Lord of hosts? I'm going to stop that reading there. But the point that's being made is not only were you worshipping these false gods, but the very commands you were given, which is in every time you give an offering, it should be a perfect animal.

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It should be the very best you've got. You always give the very best to God. And they weren't giving the best to God. they were we'll put that one up for sacrifice because it's blind anyway or because it's lame anyway or whatever.
And they were giving God the worst. And sometimes we do that. Now this time, of course, it references a time when, I've said before, Israel was in its heyday.
Now, only 50,000 Jews had returned to Israel. So Israel had gone from containing millions to being deserted to then having 50,000 return.
[39:35] So it was very, very sparsely populated. And as we go back to Zechariah and read chapter 7, verse 7, the Lord had spoken these words when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous and even the foothills and the Negev were inhabited.

Of course, we know that at the time of him making this prophecy, the place was virtually deserted, very sparsely populated. And he goes on and gives these instructions.
Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion to 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.
But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears from hearing. They made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent them by his spirit through the former prophets.
therefore great wrath came from the Lord of hosts and just as he called and they would not listen so they called and I would not listen says the Lord.
[40:52] So the Lord says here that I called out to them they wouldn't respond. Now they're calling out to me and I'm not going to respond. Now that's a stark thing to have to bear isn't it?

And goes on in verse 14 it says but I scattered them with a storm wind among the nations whom they have not known thus the land is desolate. Now I'm going to briefly truck through these scenes because I know I'm running tight for time but what was picked out justice kindness compassion and oppression true justice no weaponizing or twisting of the law to make the innocent!
look guilty! look innocent! We are covered in this stuff at the moment our courts do this all the time and we finish up I mean I can rattle off a few people where whether you agree with them or not they've been unjustly treated Rainer Fulmich who you may have heard of who's made quite there's a they just locked him up no no evidence they locked him up on something spurious Tommy Robinson you may disagree with Tommy Robinson but he's now being imprisoned I and legally speaking you have a hard job finding what he's done wrong I mean it's a matter of personal opinion whether he's been an odious person or not but that's not illegal the lady who's in prison for praying silently outside the abortion clinic Andrew Bridgen is another example who has been ruined because he spoke the truth that's the kind of thing that this speaks again and
Israel of course was well known for its misapplication of the law and Jesus himself was a victim of it as we realize when we look at his trial the occasion when Jesus drove the traders from the temple was also evidence of an unjust system they were trading in the temple and making poor people pay extortionate prices for sacrificial animals because when they brought an animal the priest would immediately say now that animal is not suitable you have to buy one of ours so there was a lack of justice kindness the hallmark of God's community should be kindness yet Israel's past was fraught with examples of unkind treatment of widows and orphans child sacrifice the destitute left to starve unkindness to senior relatives just briefly turn with me to Mark 7 and verse 9 and
I'm going to have to finish with this and just pick it up next time Mark chapter 7 so they are Jesus talking to people who are doing what we're talking about they're not being kind or compassionate to elderly relatives and so he says this you are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition for Moses said honour your father and mother and he who speaks evil of father and mother is to be put to death but you say if a man says to his father his mother whatever I have that would help you is korban that is to say given to God you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down and you do many things such as that so the idea of korban was that everybody was expected to support their elderly men introduced an extra bit of law that said if you dedicate something to God it becomes korban and you can't spend it on anything else so by taking your money and wrapping it up as korban you don't then have to provide for your parents because you can't touch that money and it was absolutely awful compassion being soft hearted to the afflicted drawing them in looking after them

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[45:10] Jewish society was often opposed to this which is why you read of people like the man at the gate beautiful who sat there for years without any help or the man who tried to put himself in the pool of Siloam and everybody charged past him and went into the pool and didn't help him and then oppression and I'll finish with this and we'll pick up the last bits next week the thing that has always taken place right up until the most recent example I can think of is the Jesuits a while ago but widows and orphans a poor widow would often be treated as cheap labour a wealthy widow people would want to get their hands on her money and so they would endear themselves and you can read about this in other scriptures but they would endear themselves to widows in order to divest them of their funds and the Jesuits used to do this they would get alongside widows and often become sexually involved with them in order to get their money and it's absolutely awful orphans would also be treated as cheap labour or slavish labour and our own society used to do this with the work houses so these are all common aspects of our own society and as we'll see God is certainly not pleased with them and I am going to stop there even though

I'm not quite finished but we will pick it up next time and I'll tag it on to chapter 8 which we're going to do next time so Father thank you for this word and perhaps Lord you could teach me the art of brevity Lord we do love your word Father I do pray that you teach us how to learn from your word so that we don't repeat the folly that we've read about from past generations Father thank you and I do pray that our hearts will be changed by what we've read in Jesus name Amen Amen

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