

Zechariah 7:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?

Analysis

And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?—God responds to the delegation's fasting question (7:1-3) by probing motives. The Hebrew *vəkhī 'akhōl 'akhaltem vəkhī shātōh shəthītem hālō' 'attem hā'ōkhəlīm və'attem hashshōthīm* (כי אכלתם וכי שתה) uses emphatic repetition. The rhetorical question exposes self-centered religion: their eating and drinking served themselves, not God.

The principle extends to fasting (v. 5): if eating serves self, doesn't fasting also serve self? God desires neither self-indulgent feasting nor self-righteous fasting but heart-level worship. Isaiah 58:3-7 similarly rebukes fasting divorced from justice and mercy. Jesus taught, 'when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast' (Matthew 6:17-18). The question 'Did not ye eat for yourselves?' diagnoses religious externalism—ritual without relationship, form without faithfulness. True worship flows from love for God and neighbor, not self-focused performance seeking divine favor or human applause.

Historical Context

The delegation asked whether to continue fasting in the fifth month (commemorating Jerusalem's destruction, 586 BC) now that the temple was being rebuilt (7:3). God's response: your fasts were never about Me but about yourselves

—your grief, your ritual, your tradition. After seventy years, their fasting had become empty routine. The question challenged post-exilic Judah to examine motives: Do you fast to manipulate God or to genuinely mourn sin? Do you eat to enjoy God's gifts gratefully or merely to satisfy appetites?

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the question 'did not ye eat for yourselves?' expose self-centered religion?
2. In what ways can fasting become as self-serving as feasting?
3. What motives drive your spiritual disciplines—genuine love for God or self-focused performance?

Interlinear Text

אַתֶּם	כָּל	וְ	כִּי	כָּל	יְמִינְךָ	וְ	שְׁתִים	כִּי	כָּל	יְמִינְךָ	וְ	אַתֶּם
H3588	And when ye did eat	H3588	and when ye did drink	H3808		H859		H398		H8354		

בְּשַׁתִּים: בָּאָכֵל יְמִינָה
And when ye did eat H859 and when ye did drink H8354
H398

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 10:31 (Parallel theme): Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Hosea 8:13 (Parallel theme): They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt.

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