

Zechariah 8:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. This remarkable prophecy promises to transform mournful fasts into joyful feasts. The four fasts commemorated stages of Jerusalem's destruction: the **fourth month** (Tammuz—breach of Jerusalem's walls, 2 Kings 25:3-4), the **fifth month** (Av—temple's burning, 2 Kings 25:8-9), the **seventh month** (Tishri—Gedaliah's assassination, ending Jewish governance, 2 Kings 25:25, Jeremiah 41:1-3), and the **tenth month** (Tevet—beginning of Babylon's final siege, 2 Kings 25:1, Jeremiah 39:1).

The promise "**shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts**" (yihyu le-veit Yehudah le-sason u-le-simchah u-le-mo'adim tovim, יְהִי לְבֵית יְהוּדָה לְסָסֹן וּלְסִמְחָה וּלְמַעֲדִים טוֹבִים) uses three synonyms for celebration: sason (שָׁסֹן), simchah (שִׁמְחָה), and mo'adim tovim (מַעֲדִים טוֹבִים, gladness), and mo'adim tovim (מַעֲדִים טוֹבִים, good/cheerful appointed feasts). The accumulation emphasizes exuberant celebration. What once marked tragedy will mark triumph—God completely reverses their fortunes. This transformation from mourning to dancing echoes Psalm 30:11: "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing."

The concluding command "**therefore love the truth and peace**" (ve-ha-emet ve-ha-shalom ehavu, וְהַשְׁלֹום אֶחָד וְהַמְּתָת אֶחָד) grounds this reversal in ethical commitment. The verb ahav (אהָב, love) means to delight in, be attached to, pursue devotedly. Emet (הַמְּתָת, truth) and shalom (שְׁלֹום, peace) aren't mere concepts but lived realities—truthfulness in all dealings and wholeness in all relationships. God's blessing flows to communities characterized by these qualities.

Historical Context

These fasts had been observed since 586 BC, making them approximately 66 years old by 520 BC. They had become deeply embedded in Jewish religious practice, expressions of national grief and repentance. Asking whether to continue them was more than calendar adjustment—it questioned whether restoration had truly arrived. Were they still a mourning people, or had God's favor returned?

God's answer transcends the immediate question. He doesn't merely say "stop fasting"—He promises transformation into feasts. This looks beyond the current partial restoration (temple rebuilding, small remnant returned) to ultimate fulfillment when mourning ceases entirely. Isaiah prophesied similar reversal: "the ransomed of the LORD shall return... and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:10). Jesus blessed those who mourn, promising they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:4).

For Christians, this transformation finds fulfillment in the gospel. Christ has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows (Isaiah 53:4), turning the tragedy of the cross into the triumph of resurrection. The church's existence testifies to God's power to transform mourning into celebration. Yet full realization awaits Christ's return when "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore" (Revelation 21:4). Until then, we live in the "already but not yet"—celebrating God's accomplished salvation while awaiting final consummation.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What areas of mourning or grief in your life need to hear God's promise of transformation into joy?
2. How does God's power to reverse fortunes—turning fasts into feasts—encourage faith when circumstances seem irredeemably tragic?
3. Why does God connect the promise of celebration (fasts to feasts) with the command to love truth and peace?
4. In what ways has the gospel already transformed your mourning into joy, and what future transformation do you still anticipate?
5. How can the church today embody both honest lament over sin and suffering while celebrating the hope of ultimate restoration?

Interlinear Text

בָּהּ אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים וְאַתָּה תַּעֲשֶׂה
H3541 Thus saith the LORD of hosts The fast of the fourth The fast
H559 H3068 H6635 H6685 H7243 H6685

יְהִי הַפְּנִימִישׁ וְאַתָּה תַּעֲשֶׂה
of the fifth The fast of the seventh The fast of the tenth
H2549 H6685 H7637 H6685 H6224 H1961

טוֹב יְמִינְךָ וְלִמְעֵד יְמִינְךָ וְלִשְׁמַךָּ הַלְּשָׁן וְיְהוּדָה
shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness feasts and cheerful
H1004 H3063 H8342 H8057 H4150 H2896

וְבָשֵׁל וְמִתְּאַמֵּת וְאֶקְבָּה
the truth and peace therefore love
H571 H7965 H157

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 39:2 (Parallel theme): And in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up.

Zechariah 8:16 (Peace): 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:

Jeremiah 52:4 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about.

Zechariah 7:5 (Parallel theme): Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, 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?

Zechariah 7:3 (References Lord): 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?

2 Kings 25:25 (Parallel theme): But it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died, and the Jews and the Chaldees that were with him at Mizpah.

Psalms 30:11 (Parallel theme): Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

Isaiah 12:1 (References Lord): And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

Isaiah 35:10 (References Lord): And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Esther 9:22 (Parallel theme): As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from

mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

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