



Faith and Love C.O.G.I.C  
Sunday School

Lesson 13 August 24, 2025  
GOD DEMANDS JUSTICE

# SUNDAY SCHOOL CORE VALUES



## **SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING**

**Superintendent/Teacher:** Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. **Psalms 133:1**

**School/Class:** But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. **Hebrews 13:16**

**Superintendent/Teacher:** All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. **2 Timothy 3:16**

**School/Class:** Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. **Psalms 119:105**

## **SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING**

**Superintendent/Teacher:** Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. **Philippians 2:4**

**School/Class:** He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor. **Proverbs 22:9**

**Superintendent/Teacher:** Therefore he says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.” **Ephesians 4:8**

**School/Class:** As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. **1 Peter 4:10**

## **SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING**

**Superintendent/Teacher:** For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:12**

**School/Class:** For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function. **Romans 12:4**

**Superintendent/Teacher:** By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. **John 13:35**

**School/Class:** For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. **Gal. 5:13**

## **SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING**

**ALL:**

But grow in the grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. **2 Peter 3:18**

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- Bible Basis: Zechariah 7:8-14
- Bible Truth: God requires kindness and mercy for widows, orphans, aliens, and the poor. The Lord will also heal the wounds of the afflicted and shower prosperity on the people.
- Memory Verse: VERSE: "Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgement, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor, and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart" (Zechariah 7:9-10).
- Lesson Aim: By the end of the lesson, we will: STUDY the punishment meted out by God for those who reject His demands; MAKE CONFESSIONS concerning how we abandon the weak; and SHOW KINDNESS to the oppressed and the weak.
- Background Scriptures: Zechariah 7:8-14; Isaiah 30:18-26; Psalm 147:1-11 - Read and incorporate the insights gained from the Background Scriptures into your study of the lesson.



**Zechariah 7:8-14, KJV**

**8** And the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying,

**9** Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:

**10** And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

**11** But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

**12** And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.



## **Zechariah 7:8-14, KJV**

**12** Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts.

**13** Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts:

**14** But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

## LIGHT ON THE WORD

Zechariah was likely a young boy when he first began to prophesy. It appears that the second part of his book belongs to his old age. Zechariah was the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet (1:1). He was an enthusiast for the rebuilding of the temple in 520 B.C.

## **LIGHT ON THE WORD**

Malachi, Zechariah, and Haggai all prophesied during the post-exilic period. This was a time in Israel's history after the returning of the exiles to Jerusalem in 538 B.C. up until the time of Christ. During the post-exilic period, the people's main concern was the building up of Jerusalem and the second temple. At various times there were enemies who tried to stop the restoration and rebuilding of the temple, and the people of Judah's own complacency in worshiping Yahweh and doubt concerning the future of the nation. Because of this, the Lord raised up prophets to stir the people to action and to give them a vision and hope for the future.

## LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON:

AIM: Students will know that some people show no kindness, mercy, or justice to others.

# INTRODUCTION

## **Zechariah's Prophetic Oracles**

Zechariah prophesied during a time of great upheaval in the Persian Empire. Cambyses, the son of Cyrus the Great, succeeded his father, who died in 530 B.C. Then Darius took the throne after Cambyses' sudden death in 522 B.C. to inherit the job of extinguishing several rebellions that sprang up throughout the empire. At the same time, the Jews who had returned to their homeland were rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai and they both preached to encourage the people to continue the work of rebuilding this second temple.

# INTRODUCTION

## **Zechariah's Prophetic Oracles**

It is in this context that a delegation is sent to Zechariah from Bethel, the former site of idolatrous worship in the Northern Kingdom. The delegation is sent to ask whether they should continue fasting now since their seventy-year exile would soon be completed (7:3).

Zechariah begins a series of prophetic oracles concerning the time of the Messiah and the renewed righteousness of the people of God.

# BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: Students will learn that God consistently communicates that obedience and justice are more important than any ritualistic act.



## I. THE CALLING

False Worship

Zechariah 7:8-10

This passage begins with God's calling for the Israelites. It is a formula that is often used in reference to their basic duties as God's covenant people. They were to "execute true judgment and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother." These two admonitions are prominent in Scripture, especially in the prophetic writings (Micah 6:6-8; Hosea 12:6-7). Zechariah's prophecy gets at the heart of true covenant loyalty to God, which is not found in blindly following religious rituals such as fasting at a certain time of year, but in dealing justly with others and showing them the kindness and compassion of God.

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## I. THE CALLING

False Worship

Zechariah 7:8-10

8 And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying,

The people of Bethel (an important and symbolic town; its name means "house of God") had sought out the priest and prophets to see if they should fast during a certain month, as was their custom. Jehovah takes this opportunity to recall to the people's minds the former prophets and their message. Zechariah realizes that Bethel's religious practice is similar to that of Israel and Judah before the exile, who were practicing religious rituals but did not have any true heart involvement or genuine repentance behind it. In light of this suspicion, he re-minds the people that the prophets had, for years, warned the people about practicing ritual without true worship.

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# I. THE CALLING

False Worship

Zechariah 7:8-10

9 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions everyman to his brother:

At this point in the book of Zechariah, the building of the temple is well underway, so that in one sense, God's people are showing responsiveness and obedience to His command. However, it is clear from God's word through Zechariah that true covenant faithfulness is absent, as evidenced by the failure of the people to demonstrate justice and kindness in community. God's voice thunders with a verb-noun combination: shapat (Heb. shah-FAHT) and mishpat (Heb. mish-PAHT). These words are from the same Hebrew tri-consonantal root, sh-p-t, and are linked together in a phrase that might be literally translated as "judge a judgment." This word combination has a variety of meanings that, taken together, speak not only of "judgment" but of "judgment according to truth."

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**I. THE CALLING**

False Worship

Zechariah 7:8-10

9 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions everyman to his brother:

Although the people have apparently shown some discernment and wisdom, the forceful repetition of this word group indicates that they have not extended true justice and mercy to their neighbor, even though the Lord has shown remarkable mercy to them. As a result, Jehovah demands conduct that simply reflects the way He has treated His people. "Mercy" and "compassions" do not refer to some heroic act or unreasonable demand, but the natural and proper outgrowth of the mercy the people had received from the Lord's hand.

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# I. THE CALLING

False Worship

Zechariah 7:8-10

10 And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

Zechariah's call for justice rather than oppression repeats the calls of the prophets before the exile, as well as God's command to show mercy to the helpless (Deuteronomy 14:29; 16:11; 24:19-21). Although the verb *ashaq* (Heb. *ah-SHAHK*) can often mean "defraud," "oppress" is a better translation here because, in this context, the word emphasizes the position of power in which the Israelites find themselves, relative to the helpless among them. Once again, these commands are full of sad irony: Although the Jews found themselves utterly helpless in Babylon and Persia, God showed them mercy and made a way for them to return to Jerusalem and build the temple. Yet, shockingly, the Jews have turned and looked on the powerless in their community with contempt, perhaps even taking advantage of their lowly position.

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**I. THE CALLING**

False Worship

Zechariah 7:8-10

10 And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

God's covenant people are supposed to mirror the covenant faithfulness He has shown them. In light of the Gospel revealed through Christ, the perfect Covenant Keeper, we understand that our failings are covered in the blood of the new covenant, shed by the Lamb. Because of Christ's sacrifice, we should strive to demonstrate His faithfulness to us in our dealings with each other!

# LIGHT ON THE WORD

## **An Attitude and Behavior of Justice**

God's justice and compassion are spelled out in detail in verse 10. The poor and marginalized are to be the objects of this justice and compassion. They were commanded to not "oppress the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor." These groups were landless and without inherited rights in Israelite society and could not plead their case in the courts of law, making them vulnerable to oppression. As a result, the Law of Moses had several stipulations to protect them from those who would take advantage of them (Exodus 22:22, 23:6-9; Deuteronomy 10:18-19, 24:14).



# LIGHT ON THE WORD

## An Attitude and Behavior of Justice

Zechariah also zeroes in on the internal state of the heart with the words "Let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart." It is not just about external righteousness, but the attitude we have toward our fellow brother and sister. These words echo similar admonitions in the Torah (Leviticus 19:15-18) and Jesus' focus on the internal attitudes that produce outward sinful actions (Matthew 5:28, 15:19).

## II. THE REJECTION

Stubborn People  
Zechariah 7:11-12

Zechariah recalls the people's past disobedience. First he goes over their initial actions in response to the words of God concerning their covenant duties of justice and compassion. The people were stubborn and would not listen to the Word of God concerning their behavior.

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## II. THE REJECTION

Stubborn People  
Zechariah 7:11-12

**11 But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.**

The word "hearken" in the King James Version, although not commonly used today, brings out the sense of the Hebrew word qashab (kahSHAV), which means more than just listening. It does not merely indicate that the Israelites had failed to hear the prophets' warnings; it means that they had heard these warnings all too well, but had stubbornly refused to repent and obey. Nevertheless, the focus on hearing is obvious; the phrase "pulled away the shoulder" might be expressed in more modern terms as "turned their backs" (implying a breaking of relationship and disobedience, but also making it harder to hear). The phrase translated "they stopped their ears" literally means "they made their ears heavy," suggesting that the act of listening was burdensome to them.

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Stubborn People  
Zechariah 7:11-12

**11 But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.**

The final clause shows the purpose of these actions on their part: They did not want to hear the warnings of the prophets, and although they no doubt heard the warnings, they made every effort to pretend that they hadn't. Zechariah's warning gains added force in that his hearers could hardly claim not to have heard him! The actions of their ancestors and the resulting destruction and despair would have made God's warning utterly impossible to ignore.

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## II. THE REJECTION

Stubborn People  
Zechariah 7:11-12

12 Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.

The description of the covenant people's faith-lessness continues, with a natural transition from the ears to the heart (which in the Bible always represents the center of both understanding and affections). There is no doubt who the guilty party is in this covenant violation. God did not harden their hearts, as He did with Pharaoh (Exodus 9:12, 10:1, 20); they hardened their own hearts. On the contrary, the prophets before the Exile portray a God longing for His people to return to Him, pining for His adulterous bride.

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The intentional hardening described here was heartbreaking, coming from a people who had seen the disastrous consequences of disobedience. The word used for "adamant stone" shamir (shah-MEER) is the word used for the hard point of a stylus, usually made of a kind of quartz. The people had made their hearts as hard as flint.

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## II. THE REJECTION

Stubborn People  
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Zechariah mentions the Spirit as the agent of the former prophets' inspiration. This reference brings out the seriousness of not heeding their commands and warnings-to do so was to deny the very Spirit of God. The New Testament shows us that denying the Spirit is blasphemy (Mark 3:22-30). Ananias and Sapphira paid with their lives for what is called "lying to the Holy Spirit" (see Acts 5:1-10). It is no wonder that the military phrase "LORD of hosts" reappears, with God pictured as going to war against His own people! Their treason has brought about the King's inevitable response, despite centuries of patience.



# LIGHT ON THE WORD

## Hearts of Stone

Zechariah continues his description with the condition of their hearts in light of God's Word to them. He describes their hearts as adamant stone or flint. Flint was a form of quartz that was abundant in the land of Palestine. It is a very sharp, hard stone that can be used for starting fires. This was a picture of Judah's collective heart. They were firm and resolute in turning away from God and rejecting His Law and the words of the prophets. This resulted in the wrath of God on the whole nation.

### III. SCATTERING

Hearing, but Not Listening  
Zechariah 7:13-14

Zechariah concludes this oracle with a description of God's wrath on the nation of Judah as they refused to hear His Word. Judah's deafness to God's Word receives a reciprocal response from God to their prayers. Since they will not listen to His Word, He will not listen to their prayers. This is similar to the words of Proverbs 28:9: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (KJV). This is a clear example of what happens when we refuse to obey God's Word: He will refuse our prayers.

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### III. SCATTERING

Hearing, but Not Listening  
Zechariah 7:13-14

13 Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts:

The verbs in this passage suggest repeated, customary actions; the Lord's call to His people was, of course, repeated many times over, as was their unbelieving response. God in His mercy patiently offered restoration far beyond what His people deserved. Eventually, however, He executed His justice in a perfectly proportional way. Because He had called to them and they had not listened, he would not hear their cries. Yet, God provided safety and security (albeit in Babylonia) for those who truly repented. Many of these same people returned to Jerusalem and were addressed by Zechariah. For them, the importance of hearing the Lord's call was abundantly clear.

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### III. SCATTERING

Hearing, but Not Listening  
Zechariah 7:13-14

**14 But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.**

The term translated "scattered ... with a whirlwind" occurs seven times in the Old Testament (cf. Isaiah 54:11; Habakkuk 3:14), and in all but two cases, it refers to a violent storm. This is not a literal storm, however, but the worst kind of curse imaginable: exile from the Promised Land, where the people had rest, and forcible removal into the terrible strangeness of foreign lands, with strange customs and foreign gods. It is no accident that the curses of Deuteronomy 28 focus primarily on assault and capture by a foreign people; this was the worst kind of judgment imaginable for a people whose very lifeblood, blessedness, and shalom depended on the land that had been promised to their great forefather Abraham hundreds of years earlier.

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### III. SCATTERING

Hearing, but Not Listening  
Zechariah 7:13-14

14 But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

And so the worst kind of upheaval took place: Whereas back in the glory days of Israel-the reigns of David and Solomon-the whole world traveled through the blessed land, now it had become desolate, without the hum of merchants traveling through it. Given that this land at the eastern end of the Mediterranean was a key crossroads, its desolation would have been a terribly striking reminder of God's rejection of His people.

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### III. SCATTERING

Hearing, but Not Listening  
Zechariah 7:13-14

**14 But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.**

As Zechariah now stands among the people to whom God has shown great mercy and restored their land, his warnings and promises focus on making sure that the people retain the blessedness promised to them. Such warnings and promises are wonderfully relevant to people who are richly blessed in Christ. Believers must both hear and obey God's commands.

# LIGHT ON THE WORD

## Unfruitful and Unproductive

The Lord eventually cannot tolerate the wickedness of His people and decides to scatter them like a whirlwind "among all nations whom they knew not." This happened in the Babylonian captivity. Judah was invaded by Nebuchadnezzar, and Jerusalem was sacked in 586 B.C. Most of the people were exiled to Babylonia or fled to other surrounding nations. Their disobedience resulted in their livelihood being made unfruitful and unproductive. Instead of being filled with farms and vineyards and people moving about to work and play, this land would remain empty, a symbol of what happens when we do not show justice and compassion to our neighbors.



## BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: Students will expect divine displeasure  
when they reject divine command.

## BIBLE APPLICATION

There are numerous problems in our society. Gangs and drugs plague our urban areas. Our national economy is unstable. Wars with other nations are a constant threat. We pray and cry out to God and observe all the outward rituals of religion, but we do not have a high priority on justice and compassion for our neighbor. If these two things had priority in our lives, then we would be able to eradicate these problems. Instead we cry out to God without listening to His Word. It is important for us not only to cry out to God, but also do what He says. Sometimes the solution to our problems lies within our own hearts as we turn back to Him.

## STUDENT RESPONSES

AIM: Students will utilize the resources with which God has blessed them to help others.

## STUDENT RESPONSES

Often justice issues are separate from our prayer life. It is possible that we have cried out to God, but He does not hear because we have not obeyed His call to show justice and compassion to those less fortunate. As an experiment, before your private times of prayer, list out ways that you can personally show justice and compassion to those around you. Once you make this list, pray for the people you will serve. Make note in the days to come whether God answers your other requests as well. Sometimes He isn't hearing us because we aren't hearing Him.

# Prayer

God of Justice and Compassion,

Your love for those who need Your guidance is a very present reality.

Give us the resources, the hope, and the fortitude to help others. Your love never fails, so let us in love, be the light of hope to others.

In Jesus' Name we pray.

Amen.

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Next Sunday  
August 31, 2025  
Lesson 14  
Return to a Just God  
Malachi 3:1-10