

September 19 Answers

- 1) Two years after Zechariah's night visions, the people of **Bethel** came to ask the priests and prophets whether the **fasts** to remember the destruction of Jerusalem should still be kept. Through Zechariah, God rebuked the **attitude** which lay behind the question. Yes, they had fasted during the exile, but their fasts were times of **self-pity**, not genuine repentance and remorse (cf. Isa 58:1–8). They fasted for themselves just as they **feasted** for themselves. It was an empty ritual because it was not done in **sincerity** of heart. Zechariah urged the people to repent and practice righteousness, for their self-centeredness had been shared by their wicked and unrepentant **fathers**. God told the remnant that He was "**jealous** for Zion with great **jealousy**" (Zech 8:2). He would restore the city in the present, and He would make it even greater in the distant future (Zech 8:3–5). God then said, "All this may seem **impossible** to you now, a small remnant of God's people. But is it impossible for me?" (Zech 8:6 NLT). When we struggle with doubt and worry, we need to remember that **nothing** is too hard for God! (Gen 18:14). God's plans for their good should motivate them to live holy lives (Zech 8:16–17). If they would do this, if they would "love truth and peace," God would turn their fasts into times of "joy and **gladness** and cheerful feasts" (Zech 8:19).