

- c. There is no proof that these fasts played an important role in Israel's on-going history although fasting would serve considerable purpose during the whole Israelitish economy.
- d. It seems obvious that they were spiritual enactments developed for a particular end. But the tradition is a strong 70 years old (7:5) and has a "heart-relationship" with the people. It is not going to be easily given up.

3. The Solution

- a. The immediate solution is this: it is better to honor the word of God given by the prophets than the traditions and practices accumulated through the years. But this statement is not put forth so bluntly and, in fact, the point is derived in a rather circuitous route.
- b. Procedure to the solution:
 - (1) To whom did the Israelites fast and to whom did they eat (7:5-6) ? Was one to the nation and the other to God? Was the fast any more to God than the days of eating? The suggested answer is "no" and the important matter is not whether they were eating or drinking on a given day but were they hearing the word of the prophets (v. 7)? Their problem in Babylon was not one of the observation of days but one that grew from not hearing the Word of God. It was true then and it is still true today. Hear the Word of God and do the things He says and then fill in the other items of suggested importance.
 - (2) This is amplified in 7:8-14 with an eye to the past. Their fathers did not hear the word and were scattered.
 - (3) 8:1-8 changes the scene with vs 1-3 speaking of the present reality and vss 4-8 of a future reality (my concept). It changes the scene to show those who ask what God has done now...against the grim background of what He had done to those who did not hear the Word as He gave it.