

III. THE HISTORICAL INTERLUDE Zechariah 7-8A. The setting

It is a critical time in the history of the returnees. They have begun the work but some of the same old problems are showing up again-- lethargy, reluctance, etc. And now a "theological" problem has arisen and the question is if the work must wait until all of the hairs are split before the Temple can be finished?

B. The Problem

Should the children of Israel continue the fasts that they had been honoring in Babylon the last several years...several of them. It was an emotive thing, as you can see. Should they discontinue these or should they honor the traditional past that made them successful? The question is just the sort that stops a good work while the workers fight it out.

1. Some notes on the fasts:

- a. they were not Mosaic in origin (not of the law of God)
- b. there is no evidence they were newly revealed to the prophets
- c. there is no proof they were needed for the present
- d. it seems most likely that they represented spiritual exercises adopted in Babylon to keep the community together and unite it in worship and repentance. It was probably a practice of 70 to 100 years vintage.

2. Some comments on the requirement of God.

C. The Solution

1. In Time past:

- a. Honor God in all you do 7:4-5
- b. Obey His word 7:8-9
- c. Profit by the example of the fathers 7:10-14

2. In Time present:

- a. Believe God 8:1-8
- b. Hear His Word 8:9-15
- c. Practice the Truth 8:16-17

3. In Time to come: 8:18-23...love what God does and do not be hung up on our own devices.

D. Conclusion: Actually the fasting question is never answered. It is put before the conscience and heart of the worshipper and that party is to put it into perspective in accord with the will of God. Many things of our making need to be put in that order...whole churches rise and fall while worrying about things like the fast of the 5th month.