ISRAEL’S SELF-IMPOSED FASTS IN EXILE

Tenth month (Jan. 10) – the day the siege of Jerusalem began, 588 BC

Fourth month (July 9) – Babylon breached Jerusalem’s wall, 586 BC

Fifth month (August 10) – Jerusalem destroyed and burned, 586 BC

Seventh month (October 1) – Gedaliah, the new governor, also slain, 586 BC

(See Jeremiah 52:4-12 and 41:1.)

“The question raised in Zechariah 7-8 was whether those fasts should be continued, inasmuch as they had returned to rebuild the temple. The Lord’s answer provided two clarifications concerning fasting (cf. Isaiah 58:4-8):

a. Fasting was designed for God’s glory, not for man’s merit.

Self-abnegation easily becomes self-pity and an empty ritual of self-worship. (7:5-6)

b. Fasting is worthless unless it is accompanied with acts of justice, kindness, and compassion toward one’s neighbors (7:9-10). Israel’s lack of these brought the Lord’s judgment of destruction and desolation (7:11-14).
The question concerning fasting  7:1-3

FOUR MESSAGES, introduced by “Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,” (or very similar phraseology)

MESSAGE ONE  7:4-7

MESSAGE TWO  7:8-14

MESSAGE THREE  8:1-17

MESSAGE FOUR  8:18-23
The Question concerning fasting   Zechariah 7:1-3

Message ONE   A matter of motivation   Zechariah 7:4-7

The LORD’s answer in a word: ________

God tells Zechariah to ask all of the people of the land 3 questions:

1. . . . did you really fast for Me--for Me?   *(motivation)*

2. . . . do you not eat and drink for yourselves?   *(accusation)*

3. . . . should you not have obeyed My words (earlier)?  *(accusation)*
Message TWO       A matter of obedience    7:8-14

The LORD’s requirements:    7:9-10

*(positive) Execute true justice*  
Show mercy & compassion *(positive)* to your brother

*(negative) Do not oppress the *widow*  
*fatherless*  
*foreigner*  
*poor*  

Do not plan evil *(negative)* against a brother

The people’s response:    7:11-12a

--refused to heed  
--gave a stubborn shoulder  
--made their ears heavy  
--made their hearts like flint  
--refused to hear the law and the prophets

The LORD’s judgment    7:12b-14

--great wrath from the LORD of hosts  
--He would not listen to their cries for help  
--He scattered the nation with a whirlwind among all the nations which they had not known

722 BC

586 BC

--their pleasant land became desolate
Message THREE  A matter of blessing  Zech. 8:1-17

The LORD’s jealousy for His people  8:1-2

Jerusalem the Blessed  8:3-6

Return of the Remnant  8:7-10

Blessings for the Remnant  8:11-15

The LORD’s requirements for His people  8:16-17

(positive)  Speak truth to each other  Give (righteous) judgment (positive)
for truth justice peace

(negative) Think no evil  Do not love a false oath (negative)
against a neighbor
Fasting is changed into feasting for God’s people (Judah) 8:19

Many peoples from all nations will seek the LORD in Jerusalem 8:20-23

Prayer will be offered in worship of the one true God, the LORD of hosts 8:21-22