

FASTING, FOOD, AND LENT

A BIBLE STUDY ON WHETHER GOD WATCHES WHAT WE EAT

*“Then came to him the disciples of John, saying,
Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?”*

~ Matthew 9:14

1. Lent and Fasting – Watching What You Eat

- a. The existence of Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday) proves the problem with “Holy” Lent.
- b. Fat Tuesday the final celebration of Ordinary Time, Ash Wednesday begins “Holy” Time.
- c. ‘Lent’ comes from words for spring, lengthening (of days), a 40(46) day fast for Easter
- d. Catholic obligation: 1st & last day, no Sunday, fish Fridays, 18-59, 1 meal/day + 2 small
- e. Orthodox are fasting champions with 18 weeks +weekly and monthly fasts, no age limit
 - i. 9 discipline levels: Level 1 - Fasting twice a week and during Holy Week.
- f. Evangelicals have picked up fasting/Lent in attempt to “redeem the ancient cultures”

2. Why People Fast – *They think God is watching what they eat.*

- a. Most people fast because their flesh wants things (appearance, affliction, reward, favor)
- b. Flesh loves to boast & be seen doing things pleasing to God (humblebrag) -Lk 18:10-12
- c. They are commanded or instructed to by religious leaders - Matt 15:3, 7-11
- d. They want to unlock the secret to supernatural power - Matt 17:19-21
- e. They want to follow Christ’s example of sacrifice (of fasting for 40 days) - Matt 4:1-2
- f. They want to get rewarded openly by Christ - Matt 6:16-18
- g. Spiritual reasons: closeness to God, spiritual growth/cleansing/discipline, forgiveness

3. Fasting in the Bible – *Did God watch what they ate?*

- a. Fat Tues, Ash Wed, Lent are not found in the Bible. *D*
- b. The law of Moses did not require fasts except for this day - Lev 16:29-34, 23:27-29
- c. The law required abstaining from certain foods/meats/pork - Lev 11
- d. Moses fasted for 40 days with prayer to God to save Israel - Deu 9:9-10, 25-29
- e. They did not do religious fasting in the wilderness b/c of daily bread but Deu 8:2-3
- f. People fasted in humiliation, grief, fear, sorrow when asking for forgiveness - 1 Sam 7:6
- g. Fasting is humbling/weakening not strengthening - Ps 35:13,69:10,109:24, 1Cor 7:5
- h. David did not fast for a miracle - “Can I bring him back?” - 2 Sam 12:21-23
- i. God delayed punishment from wicked Ahab when he fasted - 1 Kings 21:27-29
- j. The Daniel Fast™ eats only pulse/herbs - Dan 1:12-15, but Rom 14:2-3
- k. Fasting can naturally happen when your heart cares for a task - Dan 6:18, Luke 2:37
- l. The disciples of Jesus did not fast because he was with them - Matt 9:14-15

4. Eating Under Grace – *Does God watch what we eat now?*

- a. Today, fasting for God is a failure to understand His dispensation of grace - Eph 3:2-3
- b. You cannot command to abstain from meat (depart from the faith) - 1 Tim 4:1-5
- c. Since you’re dead w/Christ, forgiven, cleansed, fasts don’t honor Christ - Col 2:20-23,16
- d. You are now a Son, not in bondage to weaker elements of service - Gal 4:9-10
- e. Grace through Christ crucifies our flesh, not disciplined hunger - Gal 2:20, Rom 6:6
- f. Under law, God gave grace to humble, but now grace abounds to all sinners -Rom 5:20
- g. When we use fasting to constrain our flesh, we are not using Christ. 2 Cor 5:14, 6:1-4

5. Why Not Fast

- a. Food does not commend you to God (to eat or not to eat) - 1 Cor 8:8
- b. Lent is not the only food related religious practice that keeps people in the dark (Mass)
- c. All things are lawful, but not all things are edifying - 1 Cor 6:12, 10:23, Acts 15:20, 29
- d. If you partake of a religious fast, your liberty can miscommunicate the grace of God.
- e. Fasting is not bad: time, discipline, obesity, health, regain proper relationship to food.
- f. Some people have a belly God - Phi 3:19 - and love pleasure more - 2 Tim 3:4
- g. Paul encouraged people to break their fast for their health. Not due to God. Acts 27:34
- h. You might watch what you eat, because people watch you.