

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ Fasting Disciples

Last time: the calling of Matthew by The Physician sent to heal the sick/sinners...an explanation that should have taken the teachers of the Law to Is 1:2-6, 16-18

This time: the controversy after the calling of Matthew
Not just the forgiveness of sin but the fasting of the various disciples

We will be in the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and Matthew...starting in Mark 2

Mark 2:18-22

The scene is still the feast given by Matthew/Levi, thrown to

- say Farwell to the world and Hello to Jesus
- “share the wealth” of Jesus Christ with his publican and sinner friends

During Matthew’s feast, another controversy arises

v18 disciples of John and of the Pharisees...thy disciples:

Notice:

- There are 3 sets of disciples/followers
 1. John the Baptist’s
 2. Pharisees’
 3. Jesus’
- The controversial issue is fasting...abstaining from food and drink

Questions:

1. Where is John the Baptist?
In prison due to the collaboration of Government and Religion
(Herod Antipas and Pharisees)
2. Why does John the Baptist still have followers?
According to the testimony of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist was
the last prophet...before The Prophet (Deut 18:18-19)
Matt 11:13 prophets and Law prophesied until John
Luke 16:16 since (John) the kingdom of God is preached

John the Baptist was the voice crying in the wilderness to prepare
the way of the Lord...the forerunner of the Messiah
aka The Prophet

Even though he made a “hand off” of his disciples

John 1:29-34 Lamb of God, Son of God

John 3:25-33 Bridegroom from heaven

some of his disciples did not believe his testimony of Jesus...

they continued to follow him, even though he was in prison

they continued in his ascetic lifestyle

(locusts and honey, no pleasures of the world)

3. Why are the disciples of John the Baptist and the disciples of the Pharisees, previously antagonists because the Pharisees rejected the witness and warning of John the Baptist, now in league?

- a. In fasting

Fasting was “normal” for John and his disciples

The Pharisees fasted every Monday and Thursday

The followers of John the Baptist probably kept the fast of the Pharisees

Perhaps Matthew’s feast was on a Monday or a Thursday

- b. Against the disciples of Jesus

Did the disciples of the Pharisees see an opportunity...

difference between the disciples of John the

Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth and His disciples that

could be leveraged in their opposition to Jesus?

Did the disciples of the Pharisees go to the disciples of

John the Baptist to gain allies in their contention

with Jesus?

Jesus will respond to this controversy of fasting with 3 parables

1. Wedding
2. Garment
3. Wine skins

Note: Parable is a teaching that is both understood by those who believe and not understood by those who do not believe

The first parable is about a wedding

v19-20 children of the bridechamber...bridegroom:

“It would be inappropriate and unreasonable to expect those in the wedding party to fast (afflict the soul) while the Bridegroom is present.

Now is not the time for them to fast...but their time to fast is coming – when the Bridegroom (Me) is taken away from them (“lifted of”, “removed”)

In responding to the question, Jesus Christ goes back to the “hand off” by John the Baptist (John 3:29), to give a very pointed answer to the disciples of John the Baptist (an invitation to follow Him, break fast)

However, His response should be understood by both sets of followers in this time of great Messianic expectation (Book of Isaiah, especially)

Isa 61:10

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels.

Parable of the Wedding:

Bridegroom = Jesus Christ (as announced by John the Baptist)

Children of the bridechamber = followers of Jesus Christ clothed with garments of His salvation and the robe of His righteousness

Note: The Lord has an expectation that His people know His Word
Luke 12:48

Jesus answer, the parable of the wedding, is rooted in Scripture and is prophetic

When was Jesus “lifted off” and “removed” from His disciples?

- On the Cross (death)
- At the Ascension (departure)

The pope, when speaking in St Patty’s Cathedral last Sunday, called the cross the failure of Jesus Christ

You can go the church FB post to read my response to that blasphemy

But, as it relates to this study, what the pope said could not be further from the truth, for on the Cross Jesus Christ

- clothed His followers with garments of salvation
- covered His disciples with the robe of righteousness

With the “Bridegroom” and those in the bridechamber identified,

Jesus builds on this 1st parable in response to the issue of fasting

This parable is the key to understanding the other 2 (garment and wine skin)...

- salvation
- righteousness

v21 piece of new cloth on an old garment:
a 2nd parable – a garment

“It would be inappropriate and unwise to patch an old garment with a piece of new cloth.

The old garment has been shrunken with wear and washing, the piece of new cloth hasn’t.

Once the patched garment is worn and washed, the patch will shrink... making the tear even worse.”

Parable of the Garment...garment of salvation, robe of righteousness (Is 61:10)

Old garment = Old Covenant

the Law (no mercy or grace or salvation, only justice)

New cloth/patch = Grace (forgiveness because justice is satisfied)

[New garment = the New Covenant]

Gospel of grace, Love the fulfillment of the Law

Jesus is speaking of that which was spoken thru the prophet Jeremiah

Jer 31:31-33

John 1:17

v22 new wine into new bottles:

Jesus answers the question/challenge about His disciples not fasting with a
3rd parable – wine bottles/skins

“It would be inappropriate and unwise to put new wine into old wine skins.

The new wine will ferment and the gasses will cause the wine skin to expand.

Old wine skins are brittle and stiff...fermenting wine will destroy them and the wine will spill.

No, new wine must be put into new wine skins that are strong and pliable.”

Parable of the wine skins

New wine = grace

Old wine skin = Old Covenant/Law

New wine skins = New Covenant/Gospel of Grace

- salvation
- righteousness

Matthew 9:14-17

v14 the disciples of John:

Who is asking Jesus why His disciples are not fasting?

The disciples of John the Baptist

Present are both sets of disciples in league on this issue, but the ones speaking are the followers of John the Baptist

Given the “kinship” with the disciples of Jesus (Andrew, John), what might we surmise about the heart/motive/tone of the disciples of John the Baptist?

- grieved by the unjust imprisonment of their leader
- fearful that they may next unless “go along” with Pharisees
- confused and trying to understand such a different message
- criticizing or complaining out of jealousy

Remember: After Andrew and John left John the Baptist to follow Jesus, they followed Jesus to...the wedding feast in Cana, so radically different than their days of following John the Baptist

v15 mourn...taken from...fast:

In this Gospel written to the Jews, we get a bit of an insight about fasting not in the other two accounts: “mourn”, “fast”

Mourning and humbling oneself are associated with fasting in Scripture

What does the OT (context, Scripture at this point in time) say about fasting?

Lev 16

Lev 23

Num 29

only on the Day of Atonement...to mourn one's sin

Ps 35:13

But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing *was* sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

Ps 69:10

When I wept, *and chastened* my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach.

Joel 1:1-15

Joel 2:11-13

to mourn before the Lord judges

Zech 7:1-7

post-captivity/judgment

Q: “Should we weep/mourn and fast in the 5th month as we did while we were in exile?”
(to commemorate the burning of Jerusalem by Neb)

A: “When you fasted in the

- 5th month – burning of Jerusalem
- 7th month – slaying of Gedeliah (Jer 41:1-3)

were you mourning for your offenses against Me?

This fast does not appear in the Word of God...the people took it upon themselves to fast in the 5th and 7th months
The fast (external observance) was not commanded by God
(Who sees the internals of every person)

Since the fast was not commanded by God but was an external observance by the Jews, they fasted for the purposes of

- Self-righteousness
- false humility

Therefore...the answer to God’s penetrating question is a sheepish “No.”

What is God’s message in the question?

“Examine your motives...I know your motives.”

Then the Lord “flips the coin” and asks another penetrating question

“When you were eating and drinking in your feasts, were you feasting for yourselves?”

The answer to this penetrating question is a sheepish “Yes.”

Therefore, God lets them know that He is pleased with neither their fasts nor their feasts...as He did in Is 1 because of wrong motives
(Self-indulgence, Self-gratification vs worship of Him)

Is 58:3-11

to love your neighbor before yourself, thus to love the Lord

v16-17 old garment...old bottles:

The old is destroyed, the new preserves

Luke 5:33-39

v33 they said unto Him:

Who is the “they” speaking to Jesus?
In context (v30), the Pharisees

Mark: both sets of disciples are center stage in this controversy

Matt: the disciples of John the Baptist are center stage

Luke: the Pharisees and their disciples are center stage

What might we surmise the heart/motive/tone of the Pharisees to be?

- attacking Jesus
- unbelieving, not trying to understand, listening with a “religious filter”
- jealous, but for a different reason than the disciples of John the Baptist

With all 3 accounts in mind, it appears the disciples of the Pharisees “courted” the disciples of John the Baptist to join them in attacking Jesus and His disciples

Warning: the hearts of the grieving and the confused can easily be swayed/influenced by hearts of unbelievers

Division to destroy (devil’s way) vs division to multiply (God’s way)

v34-38 a parable:

The Wedding: “It would be totally inappropriate for My disciples to fast... as long as I am with them.”

The garment and the wine skins: For God’s purposes (Plan of Redemption) of

- salvation
- righteousness

the Old (Covenant) shows the need for the New (Covenant)...
as revealed thru the prophet Jeremiah and John the Baptist

v39 No man...desire new...old is better:

To the legalistic and self-righteous, Jesus adds in Luke’s account a drinker of the old wine preferring it to the new wine...

- not accepting the new (Covenant/Love)
- preferring the old (Covenant/Law)
- (until broken, poured out, and made new)

They will utterly reject Him...the Judaizers will compromise the old and new

Both the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees were taken aback by the feasting vs the fasting of the disciples of Jesus

- The disciples of John the Baptist because fasting was his example, part and parcel with his message
- The disciples of the Pharisees because they religiously fasted every Monday and Thursday, part and parcel of their outward show of religious observances

Jesus Christ is revealing

- His Identity (healing, forgiveness of sin, power over creation)
- His mission (to heal the sick/sinners)

Isa 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God;
for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation,
He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments,
and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels.

The Law (old garment, old wine skin, Old Covenant) could do none of those things

John 1:17

Gal 3:1-14 nor was it given for that purpose

Gal 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

1 Cor 8:8-9 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. (Law of Love)

SoM (to come)...

- spirit of the Law vs letter of the Law
- higher Law, the Law of love
- Matt 6:16-18
 - at times appropriate
 - never for show before man but an expression of the heart before God
 - not scheduled

Jesus proclaims the arrival of the New Covenant, that was foretold in the old

Both OT and NT are preserved and equally important...the entire counsel of God
The Jews, the “drinkers” of the OT, hear the NT but reject it in favor of the OT

The Law killed me

Love (1 John 4:8) died for me that I might live in Him

So what kind of a disciple are we?

- Disciple of John the Baptist: not believing the witness of the voice crying in the wilderness but holding onto old things instead?
- Disciple of the Pharisees: legalistic, religious, for show before man, self-righteous, self-justifying
- Disciple of Jesus Christ: humble, meek, loving, gracious, now mourning His absence and eager for His return, inward before God alone

Which Law are we clinging to for salvation and righteousness?

- Law of Moses
- The Law of Love

It is easy to fall back into self-righteousness (Gal 3:3)

Be diligent to be humble, meek, gracious, compassionate, loving, denying Self