

## New Wine, Old Wineskins

Mark 2:18-22



## Rising Opposition in Galilee

### Mark 2:1—3:6

- 1st episode:
  - 2:1-12
  - Unspoken criticism and questioning
- 2nd, 3rd, & 4th episodes:
  - 2:13-28
  - Three verbal confrontations
- 5th episode:
  - 3:1-6
  - Initiates a plot to take His life



## Mark 2:18-22

- 1) A Specific Question about Fasting (18)
- 2) A Specific Answer about Fasting (19-20)
- 3) A General Principle about Jesus' Kingdom (21-22)



## I. A Specific Question about Fasting (18)

- 18 – “John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, “Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?”
- Cf. Luke 5:33 – And they said to Him, “The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers, the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same, but Yours eat and drink.”

4

## The Three Pillars of Judaism

- Prayer
- Almsgiving
- Fasting



## A Brief Survey of Fasting

- Abstaining from all food for a period of time
- 1) Non-religious
  - In response to violent emotions.
  - E.g., Jonathan’s anger at his father (1 Sam. 20:34).
  - E.g., Ahab’s anger at not getting Naboth’s vineyard (1 Kings 21:4).
- 2) Religious

6

## Fasting in the Old Testament

---

- OT Law required only one fast.
  - Day of Atonement
  - Lev. 16:29-31
  - "You shall humble your souls" (came to be understood as refraining from food)
- After Babylonian Captivity (c. 500 BC), the Jews added 4 more required annual fasts
  - Zech. 7:5; 8:19
  - 10th month: Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem.
  - 4th month: Nebuchadnezzar's breaching of the walls of Jerusalem.
  - 5th month: The burning of the temple and other important buildings.
  - 7th month: The assassination of Gedaliah.

7

## Fasting in the Old Testament

---

- Voluntarily Fasting
  - 1) National Tragedies
    - E.g., Zech. 7:3-4; 8:19
  - 2) Various Crises
    - War, plague, drought, famine, etc.
  - 3) Variety of Personal reasons
    - Sickness
      - David for the child (2 Sam. 12:16ff)
      - Psalmist for sick friends (Ps. 35:13)
    - Mourning over death
      - Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:12)
    - Penitence
      - Ahab (1 Kings 21:27)
      - People after Ezra read the Law (Neh. 9:1)
    - Impending danger
      - E.g., 2 Ch. 20:3; Ezra 8:21; Neh. 1:4; Esther 4:16; Jer. 36:9

8

## Fasting in the Old Testament

---

- Duration:
  - Most common:
    - From sunrise to sundown for one day
    - One night
    - 24 hour period (Day of Atonement)
  - Others mentioned in Scripture...
    - Three days
    - 7 days
    - 40 days – Moses, Elijah, Christ.

9

## The Right Reason

---

- David in 2 Sam. 12:22 – "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows, the LORD may be gracious to me, that the child may live.'"
- Ahab in 1 Kings 21:27, 29 – "It came about when Ahab heard these words, that he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and fasted, and he lay in sackcloth and went about despondently... 'Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days, but I will bring the evil upon his house in his son's days.'"

10

## Fasting in the New Testament

---

- In Jesus' time
  - Anna (Luke 2:37)
  - John the Baptist apparently taught his disciples to fast (Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33)
  - Other 1st century disciples: Matt. 6:16-18
  - But apparently never by Jesus Himself or His disciples.
    - The one exception: the 40 days and nights of the Temptation at the beginning of His ministry.
- By Paul after his conversion on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:9).
- By Cornelius (Acts 10:30).
- By the early Christians in Antioch (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23).
- Two interesting observations:
  - 1) Never commanded of Christians.
  - 2) Never mentioned in the Epistles.

11

## The Pharisees & Fasting

---

- A regimented system of fasts
  - Included Monday and Thursday of every week.
  - Cf. Luke 18:12 – 'I fast twice a week.'
- Conclusion: all who were serious about their faith would fast regularly as well.
- In fact, their question implies that their frequent fasts demonstrated a superior religious devotion to that of those who didn't fast.

12

## II. A Specific Answer about Fasting (19-20)

- "And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they?"
  - In Greek and English expects a negative answer.
  - Those who asked were mourning and fasting.
  - Jesus changed the image to a celebration—a wedding!

13

## A First Century Wedding Celebration

- Occurred after the bridegroom went with his groomsmen to the home of the bride and brought her back to His home.
- That evening the marriage was consummated.
- A wedding party began.
  - 7 days for a virgin bride
  - 3 days for a widow remarrying
  - Food, wine, music, and dancing
  - Guests had no responsibilities.
- "The sons of the bridal chamber"
  - NAS: "the attendants of the bridegroom."

14

## What Did Jesus Mean?

- The bridegroom = Jesus.
  - Cf. John the Baptist in John 3:29 - "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.
- The attendants of the bridegroom = Jesus' disciples.
- 19 - "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast."
- 20 - "But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day."
  - Cf. John 16:16-22

15

## John Broadus

- "By this illustration our teaches that fasting is not to be regarded or observed as an arbitrary, positive institution, but as a thing having natural grounds, and to be practiced or not, according to the dictates of natural feeling as growing out of circumstances in which we find ourselves. In some situations it is appropriate and may be made beneficial; in others, it is out of place. We have no evidence that Jesus ever fasted Himself, except in the quite extraordinary case of the 40 days; but we know that the apostles and other Christians of their time fasted on special occasion. The principle here laid down cuts at the root of fasting as a regulated observance."

16

## III. A General Principle about Jesus' Kingdom (21-22)

- What is the relationship between Jesus and His teaching and 1st century Judaism?
- Two Parables (Luke 9:36).
  - First in Mark

17

## A. New Patches on Old Garments (21)

- 21 - "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results.
- Unshrunk
  - Woolen cloth not processed by a fuller.
  - The fuller would clean and comb it to remove natural oils and gum, and then would bleach it.



18

## B. New Wine in Old Wineskins (22)

- 22 – "No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."
  - First stage of wine fermentation was in vats.
  - After straining out the lees, wine was placed in jars or skins.
  - A wineskin
    - leather
    - the skin of a goat or kid



## Conclusions about the practice of fasting:

- 1) An acceptable expression of grief or sorrow.
- 2) Not required for us.
- 3) Never acceptable if done for the wrong reasons...
  - To merely follow a ritual
  - To impress others (Matt. 6:16)
  - To take personal pride in it (Luke 18:12)
  - To earn God's favor
- 4) Always must be accompanied by...
  - Prayer
  - Mourning
  - Confession
  - Cf. Is. 58:1-12; Jer. 14:10-12; Zech. 7 (especially v. 5)

20

## Conclusions from the Two Parables:

- The new cloth & the new wine
  - The teaching of Jesus
- The old, worn out garment and the old, brittle wineskins
  - 1st century Judaism.
- Key points of similarity:
  - 1) Completely incompatible
  - 2) Mutually destructive
- Jesus' call for a faith entirely separate from 1st century Judaism.
- The patch:
  - Jesus did not intend His teaching to be a patch on an old worn out system of Judaism.
  - Not incompatible with the OT properly understood.
  - Incompatible with the 1st century Judaism's distortion of the OT.
- The new wine in old wineskins:
  - Jesus and His teaching could never be contained within the forms and ceremonies and rituals and tradition of 1st century Judaism.

21

## Application

- You can't add Jesus to your religious system to repair it or prop it up.
- And you can't contain Jesus in your religious system.
- 1) Various false religions
  - E.g., Islam, or Buddhism, or Hinduism.
- 2) Cults
  - E.g., Mormons, Jehovah's witnesses.
- 3) Works-based righteousness tied to Scriptural Christianity
  - E.g., Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, Church of Christ.
- 4) Modern Philosophies
  - E.g., humanism, postmodernism (emergent church movement), environmentalism, feminism

22