

The Question of Fasting Answered

Matthew 9:14-17

Mark 2:18-22

Luke 5:33-39

Feasting Vs. Fasting: Old Vs. New

Texts:

Matthew 9:14-17,

14. Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"

15. **Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.**

16. **"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse."**

17. **"Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."**

Mark 2:18-22,

18. Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"

19. Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them.

20. **"But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.**

21. **"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse.**

22. **"And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins."**

Luke 5:33-39,

33. They said to him, “John’s disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.”

34. Jesus answered, “Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?”

35. “But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.”

36. He told them this parable: “No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old.

37. “And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined.

38. “No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins,

39. “And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, ‘The old is better.’”

Commentary:

I. John’s disciples came to Jesus asking, “Why do we (John’s disciples) and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples don’t fast at all?”

A. Some rivalry, jealousy appeared between John’s disciples and Jesus’ followers perhaps because of the decline of John’s ministry and the growth of Jesus’ ministry.

B. The questions may have arisen following the banquet at Matthew’s house.

C. John 4:1-3, The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

- D. The Pharisees may have arranged this difference between John's disciples and Jesus' disciples.
- E. John himself magnified Christ. He would have been the last to have caused division between the two groups.
- F. Jesus gives a genteel, wise, correct answer to this question in parable form.
- G. The question inferred, "You and your disciples are wrong in not fasting."

II. Parabolic answers to the questions about fasting:

- A. While Christ, the bridegroom, was with them, his disciples (sons of the bridechamber) did not fast. When Christ was taken away from them at the cross Christ's disciples would then fast, would be truly sorry and in deep grief.
 - 1. Do we, now that the bridegroom is not physically with us, fast as we should?
 - 2. John 3:29, The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.
 - 3. Pharisees ate to the point of gluttony at weddings, and appeared so sanctimonious in their fasting ritual.
 - 4. Rules of fasting were suspended at weddings.
- B. Putting "undressed cloth on an old garment" is not the way to mend an old garment, but is a sure way to cause additional tearing, damage to the old garment.

1. Shrinkage during washing would cause tearing of the garment.
2. Jesus did not come to add Christianity as a patch to Judaism including the fasting provisions.
3. Christianity was a new religion. Pharisaical fasting based on Judaism had nothing to do with Christians' fasting.
4. Jesus in his poverty knew about mending old clothes.

C. New wine is put into new wineskins, not in old wineskins which, being hard and brittle, would have ruptured from the fermenting wine.

1. Christ's teachings were not put in John's doctrinal framework nor in the framework of Judaism.
2. This included fasting and all other matters.
3. Christ's teaching were all new!
4. Some preferred the old (wine) to the new (wine), Judaism and John's teachings to those of Christ.
5. Luke 5:39, "And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'"
6. Some of John's disciples became Christian disciples, many did not.
7. 2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

The Question of Fasting Answered

Questions

1. John's _____ came and asked _____, "How is it that _____ and the _____ fast, but your _____ do not fast?"

2. Jesus answered, "How can the _____ of the _____ while he is with them? The time will come when the _____ will be taken from them; then they will _____."

3. Why do people not sew an unshrunk cloth on an old garment? Why is it not advisable to pour new wine into old wineskins? _____

4. What was the lesson Jesus was teaching by this illustration?

5. When were Christ's disciples to fast? _____

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