

**Matthew 9:14-17:** Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" <sup>15</sup> And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. <sup>16</sup> No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. <sup>17</sup> Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."

**Intro:** Last week we saw Jesus loving sinners and feasting with them. He ate with tax collectors and sinners! This got Him a reputation: **Matthew 11:18-19:** For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' <sup>19</sup> The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' (They viewed Jesus as a kind of "party animal"!)

When Jesus is with you, mourning is impossible and joy is immeasurable and unstoppable! Come Lord Jesus!

### 1. Jesus' Disciples Did Not Fast

**Matthew 9:14:** Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" (Jesus fasted!) (Daniel Hyde Story – child wondered if he prayed; read Bible?)

**a. What is fasting?:** Voluntarily abstaining (going without) food or drink or both for a period of time for the purpose of seeking God through His Word and prayer in a special and intense way for our good, for the good of others, and for God's glory. (In the Old Testament, fasting was often associated with mourning: Jesus - V. 15)

**Mourning, death, & hope: 2 Samuel 12:20-23:** Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate. <sup>21</sup> Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food." <sup>22</sup> He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' <sup>23</sup> But now he is dead. Why should I fast?"

**Fear & help (mourning): 2 Chronicles 20:2-4:** Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom, from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar" (that is, Engedi). <sup>3</sup> Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. <sup>4</sup> And Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

**Freedom from oppression (mourning) & helping the poor: Isaiah 58:6-7:** Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, & to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry & bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, & not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

**Lament & judgment (mourning): Joel 1:13-15:** Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God! Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. <sup>14</sup> Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD. <sup>15</sup> Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes.

**Repentance (mourning): Jonah 3:5:** And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

**b. John's disciples and the Pharisees fasted:** John the Baptist's ministry was a ministry calling people to repent.

**The Pharisees fasted: Luke 18:9-14:** He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: <sup>10</sup> "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed<sup>1</sup> thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' <sup>13</sup> But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' <sup>14</sup> I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

There can be a dead emptiness to religious rituals that we must beware of.

**c. Jesus disciples did not fast:** But they had a very good reason not to fast!

## **2. In Jesus' Presence, Joy Is So Vast That There Is No Time To Fast**

**Matthew 9:15:** And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?"

In Jesus' presence, joy's so vast; That there's no time to mourn or fast; But pleasures forevermore amassed  
All sin and death and pain have passed; In full, complete, and stark contrast; With sad and lonely me downcast  
Christ's love is true and pure steadfast; Forgiving all your sin and past; Life with Him's a pleasure blast  
This Bridegroom loves and will outlast; All from this world you've ever asked; And grant you joys that always last!

**a. In the Old Testament, the LORD God is the Bridegroom: Isaiah 54:5:** For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.

**b. In the New Testament, we see that Jesus is the Bridegroom: 2 Corinthians 11:2:** I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

- **Ephesians 5:31-32:** Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

- **Revelation 19:7:** Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready

**c. You don't fast at the wedding celebration:** Jesus is with them! The King has come! The Bridegroom is with them! There is great joy, not mourning! Angels sang at His birth – glory to God in the highest! Joy to the world, the LORD has come! Let earth receive her King! (Hymns; Upcoming wedding – no mourning, no fasting!)

## **3. The Days Are Coming When Jesus' Disciples Would Fast**

**Matthew 9:15:** The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

This is like a prophecy where Jesus is telling us what His disciples will do. I think He's also telling us He wants us to fast as well. And His disciples have done this! After Jesus ascends into heaven (He's taken away):

- **Acts 13:2-3:** While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." <sup>3</sup> Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

- **Acts 14:23:** And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

- **Philippians 1:21:** For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

- **Philippians 1:23:** My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

- **Revelation 22:20:** Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

#### **4. Old And New Garments And Old And New Wineskins**

**Matthew 9:16-17:** No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. <sup>17</sup> Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved." Jesus gives two word pictures here of how something brand new cannot simply be added to something old without there being devastating consequences.

**New Thing:** Unshrunk cloth; **Old Thing:** A garment – a piece of clothing; **Devastating Outcome:** Worse tear

**New Thing:** New wine; **Old Thing:** Old wineskins; **Devastating Outcome:** Ruined wine and ruined wineskins

**The Point:** New cloth patches go with new garments; New wine is for fresh, new wineskins

**D. A. Carson:** the new situation introduced by Jesus could not simply be patched onto old Judaism or poured into the old wineskins of Judaism . . . Jesus' teaching and the kingdom now dawning must be poured into new forms.

Jesus is clearly doing new things when He arrives. He comes as God in the flesh; He comes preaching that He Himself is the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God; He comes making right everything Adam messed up in his sin and rebellion against God; He defeats Satan in combat; He casts out demons; He heals the sick; He cleanses lepers; He heals the paralytic; He forgives sins; He reads people's minds; He befriends tax-collectors and sinners; and He claims His disciples cannot fast when He's around! He is the God-Man – the great Bridegroom!

People generally don't like new things – people don't like change! The Jews of Jesus' day are no exception!

But Jesus came to change His people; He came to change Judaism by fulfilling it – by being the Messiah and the yea and Amen to all God's promises – to die and rise and to save his people from their sins! **GOSPEL!** And He came to change you! Do you think Jesus can change you?

**Lloyd-Jones:** (On the new cloth and new wine and wineskins) There's a newness & a power to Christianity!

**David Platt:** It's crucial that we understand the difference between O. T. fasting & N. T. fasting. O. T. fasting was a longing & a waiting for the King to come. It was purely a future hope. N. T. fasting, on the other hand, has both a past & future element to it. The past element has to do with looking back to the life, death, & resurrection of Christ, believing firmly that the King has come. Followers of Christ have tasted the new wine of His presence. We have been forgiven of our sins, & we have been satisfied by our Savior. So in that sense, there is not mourning; there is rejoicing. Yet, at the same time, we have been promised that there is more to come; this is the future element of our fasting. Although the King has come, we know that our world is still full of sickness, disease, suffering, & pain. The effects of sin & the fall are all around us: paralysis, fevers, malaria, HIV/AIDS, cancer, tornadoes, hurricanes, etc. Based on the entire context of Matthew 9, we know that Jesus has authority over all these things; therefore, what we are longing & fasting for is the day when the King will put an end to these menaces once & for all. We'll live in a new heaven & a new earth where we will dwell forever with our King.

**John Piper:** The heart of it is longing. (*Hunger for God*; Homesickness for God) . . . We are putting our stomach where our heart is to give added intensity & expressiveness to our ache for Jesus. We fast to express our longing or our ache for all the implications of Jesus's power in the present moment that isn't completely realized. We want to see people healed. We want to see people saved. We want to see marriages redeemed. We ache, & we long for this to happen; therefore, we ask Jesus to come by putting this exclamation point of longing at the end of our desires. I think fasting is not only a positive statement saying, "This much I want you, or you are more important to me than food." But it is also a negative way of exposing latent idolatries. When I am not being medicated by food, what comes out of my heart? Anger? Lust? The need for television, more and more of it? People need to know what is at the bottom. I think Job was basically a good man. But at the bottom of Job's life was some latent sin.

When God took away his health & his children, a horribly enforced fast from children and from health, Job got bent out of shape. He said some things for which he had to later repent. I find that if I go without food for 24 hours from supper to supper or breakfast to breakfast, my, oh, my, what is exposed of my heart towards my wife and my daughter. It is a very good discipline. Not only as a positive expression of longing in prayer, but also a negative exposure of the heart so I can deal with these things as they come up.

**Psalm 73:25-26:** Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

**David Mathis:** Fasting is an exceptional measure, designed to channel and express our desire for God and our holy discontent in a fallen world. It is for those not satisfied with the status quo. For those who want more of God's grace. For those who feel truly desperate for God. The Scriptures include many forms of fasting: personal and communal, public and private, congregational and national, regular and occasional, partial and absolute. Typically, we think of fasting as "a Christian's voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes". We can fast from good things other than food and drink as well. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, "Fasting should really be made to include abstinence from anything which is legitimate in and of itself for the sake of some special spiritual purpose." (Sex; TV-David Wilkerson Story) But normal Christian fasting means privately and occasionally choosing to go without food for some special period of time (whether a day or three or seven) in view of some specific spiritual purpose.

**According to Don Whitney, fasting's spiritual purposes include:** Strengthening prayer; Seeking God's guidance  
Expressing grief; Seeking deliverance or protection; Expressing repentance and returning to God  
Humbling oneself before God; Expressing concern for the work of God; Ministering to the needs of others  
Overcoming temptation and dedicating yourself to God; Expressing love and worship to God

While the potential purposes are many, it is that last one which may be most helpful to focus our thoughts about fasting. It encompasses all the others & gets at the essence of what makes fasting such a mighty means of grace. Whitney captures it like this: "Fasting can be an expression of finding your greatest pleasure & enjoyment in life from God".

**Ligon Duncan:** Fasting my friends is mentioned in Scripture more often than baptism. Fasting is explicitly described & discussed & enjoined over seventy seven times in the holy Scriptures of the Old & New Testaments.

Fasting can help us see that those things that are obviously evil are not always the most serious threats to our hunger for God – **Piper:** The greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison but apple pie. It is not the banquet of the wicked that dulls our appetite for heaven, but endless nibbling at the table of the world. It is not the X-rated video, but the prime-time dribble of triviality we drink in every night. For all the ill that Satan can do, when God describes what keeps us from the banquet table of his love, it is a piece of land, a yoke of oxen, and a wife (Lk 14:18-20). The greatest adversary of love to God is not his enemies but his gifts. & the most deadly appetites are not for the poison of evil, but for the simple pleasures of earth. For when these replace an appetite for God himself, the idolatry is scarcely recognizable, and almost incurable. We want to hunger for God most of all!

### **CityAlight Jerusalem Lyrics**

Christ Jesus Is The Great Bridegroom  
Praise Him Who Came From Virgin Womb  
With Him No Fasting We Assume  
His Presence Shatters All That's Gloom  
But When He's Gone The Fasts Resume  
We Long For His Return, Come Soon!

He Bore God's Wrath And Judgment Doom  
Then Died Was Buried In The Tomb  
But Rose Alive With Earthquake Boom  
His Life Our Hearts He Does Consume  
He Is Our All Who Loves With Whom  
Forever Wedding Bliss Shall Bloom!