

The Gospel According to

SAINT MATTHEW

SAINT MARK

SAINT LUKE

SAINT JOHN

| CHAPTER 9, VERSES 14-17 | CHAPTER 2, VERSES 18-22 | CHAPTER 5, VERSES 33-39 | NOTHING RECORDED |
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| <p>9:14 - Then came¹ to him the disciples² of John³, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees⁴ fast⁵ oft⁶, but thy disciples² fast⁵ not?</p> <p>9:15 - And Jesus said unto them, Can the children⁷ of the bridechamber⁸ mourn⁹, as long¹⁰ as the bridegroom¹¹ is with them¹²? but the days¹³ will come, when the bridegroom¹¹ shall be taken¹⁴ from them¹², and then shall¹⁵ they fast⁵.</p> <p>9:16 - No man putteth¹⁶ a piece¹⁷ of new cloth¹⁸ unto an old garment¹⁹, for that which is put in²⁰ to fill it up²¹ taketh²² from the garment²³, and the rent²⁴ is made worse²⁵.</p> <p>9:17 - Neither²⁶ do men²⁷ put new wine²⁸ into old bottles²⁹; else the bottles³⁰ break³¹, and the wine³² runneth out³³, and the bottles³⁰ perish³⁴; but they put new wine²⁸ into new bottles³⁵, and both are preserved³⁶.</p> | <p>2:18 - And the disciples² of John³ and of the Pharisees⁴ used to fast⁵; and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples² of John³ and of the Pharisees⁴ fast⁵, but thy disciples² fast⁵ not?</p> <p>2:19 - And Jesus said unto them, Can the children⁷ of the bridechamber⁸ fast⁵, while the bridegroom¹¹ is with them¹²? as long¹⁰ as they have the bridegroom¹¹ with them¹², they cannot fast⁵.</p> <p>2:20 - But the days¹³ will come, when the bridegroom¹¹ shall be taken¹⁴ away from them¹², and then shall¹⁵ they fast⁵ in those days.</p> <p>2:21 - No man also seweth³⁷ a piece¹⁷ of new cloth¹⁸ on an old garment¹⁹; else the new piece³⁸ that filled it up²¹ taketh²² away from the old³⁹, and the rent²⁴ is made worse²⁵.</p> <p>2:22 - And no man putteth¹⁶ new wine²⁸ into old bottles²⁹; else the new wine²⁸ doth burst⁴⁰ the bottles³⁰, and the wine³² is spilled⁴¹, and the bottles³⁰ will be marred⁴²; but new wine²⁸ must be put into new bottles³⁵.</p> | <p>5:33 - And they said unto him, Why do the disciples² of John³ fast⁵ often⁴³, and make prayers⁴⁴, and likewise the disciples² of the Pharisees⁴; but thine eat⁴⁵ and drink⁴⁶?</p> <p>5:34 - And he said unto them, Can ye make the children⁷ of the bridechamber⁸ fast⁵, while the bridegroom¹¹ is with them¹²?</p> <p>5:35 - But the days¹³ will come, when the bridegroom¹¹ shall be taken¹⁴ away from them¹², and then shall¹⁵ they fast⁵ in those days.</p> <p>5:36 - And he spake also a parable⁴⁷ unto them; No man putteth¹⁶ a piece¹⁷ of a new garment⁴⁸ upon an old³⁹; if otherwise, then both the new⁴⁹ maketh a rent²⁴, and the piece¹⁷ that was taken out⁵⁰ of the new⁴⁹ agreeth not⁵¹ with the old³⁹.</p> <p>5:37 - And no man putteth⁴⁰ new wine²⁸ into old bottles²⁹; else the new wine²⁸ will burst⁴¹ the bottles³⁰, and be spilled⁴², and the bottles³⁰ shall perish³⁴.</p> <p>5:38 - But new wine²⁸ must be put into⁵² new bottles³⁵; and both are preserved³⁶.</p> <p>5:39 - No man also having drunk⁵³ old wine⁵⁴ straightway⁵⁵ desireth⁵⁶ new⁵⁷; for he saith, The old³⁹ is better⁵⁸.</p> | |

CHRONOLOGY: Spring of 28CE (After the blooming of the lilies, between March and April and prior to the Feast of the Passover on 27 March 28CE).

LOCATION: The exact location is unknown; however, it is assumed to be in the vicinity of Capernaum

COMMENTARY: Jesus is confronted by the disciples of John the Baptist. John is in prison by the order of Herod Antipas. His disciples had been instructed by John to follow Jesus, who he declared to be the Lamb of God. These disciples apparently missed the message or neglected to follow the words of their master. John's disciples were also accompanied by some Pharisees. The two groups confronted Jesus on the subject of fasting. The Jews made great pomp and circumstance from fasting. They fasted every Monday and Thursday. This consisted not only from abstaining from food and water, but going public in sackcloth and ashes as a display of mourning and piety. The disciples of Jesus apparently ignored the Jewish tradition associated with the fast. Jesus drew on a saying that John's disciples would have remembered from the mouth of John. He reminds them that the children of the bride chamber do not fast so long as the bridegroom is present. John had declared Jesus the Bridegroom. The Jews would have known that they were free from all religious obligations during the wedding feast, as long as the bridegroom was present, because such a time was reserved from joy and happiness. Jesus also teaches them that they needed to let go of their old apostate traditions and make room for the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ. He teaches them that a new un-shrunk patch on an old garment would just cause further damage as it shrinks with the wash. Similarly, new wine needs to ferment in a new pliable leather flasks because the older flasks would just burst under the pressure. Likewise, our hard hearts and old traditions cannot be retained if we hope to enjoy all the blessings of the Gospel.

FOOTNOTES:

1 - Then came – The word “came” is translated from the Greek word “προσέρχουμι” or “proserchomai”. It means to come to, approach, draw near to, or to assent to.

It is assumed that the events of this chapter occurred shortly after Jesus called Matthew to follow Him, and after the feast that Matthew held in Jesus' honor. Jesus is presumably in Capernaum for the events of this chapter. One author wrote, “In all the synoptics, this scene appears directly after the meal in which, accused of eating with publicans and sinners, Jesus responds that the sick need a physician.” (The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ: From the Transfiguration through the Triumphal Entry, Volume 2, Edited by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment, , page 135).

After the feast at Matthew's house, “then came” disciples of John and disciples of the Pharisees. Luke seems to associate these disciples with the critics that came to judge Jesus at Matthew's house. Fitzmyer clarified, “In the Lucan context the unnamed opponents have to be those mentioned in verse 30.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 596). The names of those that “came” to Jesus has eluded modern records. The accounts of this chapter are repeated in all three synoptic gospels; Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Each account has its unique telling of the chapter. Fitzmyer provides eight differences between the gospel accounts. He wrote, “Luke has again modified the Marcan form, chiefly in the following ways: (1) He omits the Marcan narrative about the

fasting done by John's disciples and those of the Pharisees. (2) He adds to the comment of Jesus' opponents the note of the characteristic of Luke, which never really is picked up in the controversy itself, dealing only with fasting. (3) He changes the second part of the opponents' question so that Jesus' disciples are said to 'eat and drink.' (4) The explanatory statement in Mark, following the question that enshrines the pronouncement of Jesus, is omitted by Luke – and also by Matthew (5) Luke changes the Marcan phrase, 'in that day' to the plural, to agree with the first part of the verse (6) Luke introduces the similitudes expressly. (7) He considerably changes the sense of the first similitude: 'a piece of unshrunk cloth' becomes 'a patch cut out of a new garment'. (8) He adds verse 39 with its proverb, a verse that is exclusive to him." (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 594).

- 2- **disciples** – The word "disciple" is translated from the Greek word "μαθητής" or "mathētēs" or "mā". It means a learner, pupil or disciple. Matthew's account seems to indicate that the disciples of John approached Jesus and questioned Him using the consistent fasting of the Pharisees as a foundation for their concern. Mark seems to indicate that disciples of John and the Pharisees came to question Jesus about fasting, while Luke seems to indicate that the same group of Pharisees and scribes that questioned Jesus at Matthew's feast came to Jesus to question him about fasting.

Another group of disciples were present, and it was those disciples that were being questioned. The disciples of Jesus apparently failed to follow the prescribed fasting expected by the Jews. These were the disciples of Jesus. We will pause to look at the various disciples associated with this chapter.

John's disciples

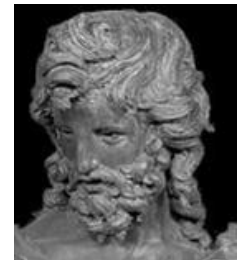
The disciples of John the Baptist were most likely individuals who recognized the need for reform and change. **"Disciples of the Baptist... seem to be a group of Palestinian Jews."** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 597). They would be more closely aligned with the Pharisees and Essenes than the Sadducees. Even so, they must have recognized that there was no sect that truly represented the doctrines of God, that is until the heard John.

John's teachings established him as a great Rabbi, even among those who may not have totally agreed with his teachings. Ancient Rabbi's traditionally accepted students called disciples. Disciples followed their Rabbi to learn the Law from him. Those who aligned themselves with John would have been extremely loyal to him. This was the typical attitude between disciples and their masters. The disciples of John would have whole heartedly committed themselves to Him. **"This passage may suggest that some rivalry existed between the disciples of John and of Jesus."** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 598).

Even though John and Jesus shared the same understanding of the Father's plan of salvation, it is apparent that not all of John's disciples shared the understanding that John had of Jesus. John had openly and clearly directed his disciples to follow Jesus.

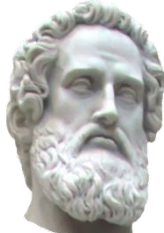


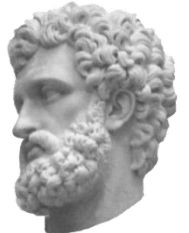

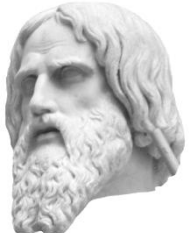


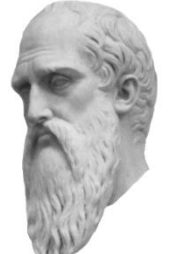
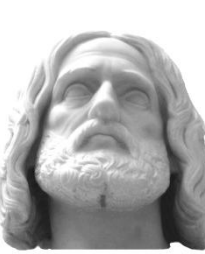
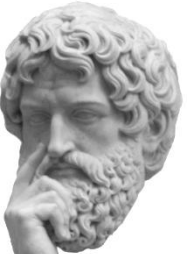

Jesus' disciples

The disciples of Jesus are somewhat difficult to define at this point. He had thousands of followers, but the definition of a follower is not necessarily a disciple. A disciple has accepted a very specific definition to come and adhere oneself to a master, and learn from his teachings. Disciples were students rather than mere followers or curiosity seekers. Jesus could very well have had hundreds of disciples. Those who accepted baptism through and by His authority would have been considered disciples. That we know of, Jesus had not yet called the twelve Apostles. The Apostles were disciples with a special and sacred charge to be witnesses of Jesus. We might assume that the disciples being challenged in this chapter regarding their adherence to the fast were members of the future twelve Apostles. Base on the timeline prior to this chapter, we know that Philip, Andrew and John had adhered themselves to Jesus after direction from John the Baptist. John had previously been their master or Rabbi. Jesus beckoned them to come and follow Him. In turn, they shared the good news with James, Simon Peter and Nathaniel (who we assume was also known as Bartholomew). They too were beckoned to come and follow Him. The previous chapter recounts the call of Matthew to become a disciple. James the lesser was the half brother of Jesus, through Mary and Joseph, and though we have no record of his call to become a disciple, we assume it happened early on in Jesus' ministry. It is likely that the disciples of Jesus who were being questioned in this chapter were at least 8 of the 12 Apostles, if not all of them. There indeed may have been others. Below are busts of the twelve apostles carved by Thorvaldsen. They stand in the "Vor Frue Kirke" in Copenhagen, Denmark. It should be noted the Judas Iscariot is not shown. Few artists carve or paint Judas. It is believe that the practice of carving him was taboo as they didn't want any honor or have glory to be placed on the man who betrayed Jesus.



John the Baptist
By Devince

The Twelve Apostles by Thorvaldsen

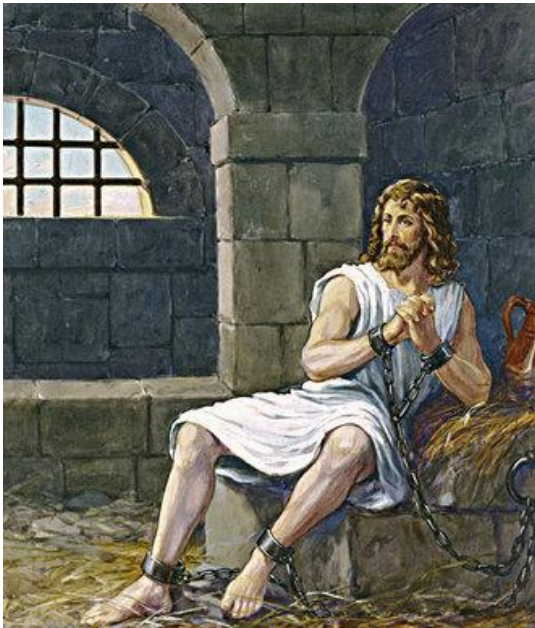
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|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| andrew BAR JONA | James BAR ZEBEDEE | John BAR ZEBEDEE | simon peter BAR JONA | matthew BAR ALPHAEUS | philip |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| JUDAS | James The Lesser | nathaniel OR BARTHOLOMEW | simon zealot OR The canaanite | Thomas | JUDAS Thaddaeus |

Disciples of the Pharisees

We should remember that the three gospel accounts differ in their account of which disciples came to challenge the disciples of Jesus. **“In Mark 2:18, it is the disciples of John and of the Pharisees. In Matthew 9:14, it is the disciples of John coming to Jesus and asking. In Luke 5:35, the antecedent is unclear; it might still be the scribes and the Pharisees.”** (The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ: From the Transfiguration through the Triumphal Entry, Volume 2, Edited by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment, , page 135). The insinuation by Mark that the Pharisees had disciples goes against our understanding of ancient discipleship. One author wrote, **“This is an odd locution, because ‘disciple’ implies adhesion to a particular master such as John the Baptist, Jesus or Hillel, not membership to a group such as the Pharisaic party.”** (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 233). I suppose that the Pharisees present may have been disciples of Pharisaic Rabbis.

The scribes and Pharisees followed a strict pattern for discipleship. Disciples were to be very disciplined, hence the word disciple. They followed their master and the law to the letter. Failure to do so would result in the loss of one's discipleship. Jesus' disciples didn't seem to fit their rather emphatic mold. **“What amazed and shocked the scribes and the Pharisees was the normality of the followers of Jesus.”** (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 65). They loved the master, and He loved them. They interacted, in many ways, like family. Already a rift was being established between the Jewish religion and those that would follow Jesus. The questioning taking place in this chapter seems to be focused on the disciples of Jesus. Marcus wrote, **“According to many scholars, the charge is brought against Jesus' disciples rather than against Jesus himself because the story reflects dispute between the early church and its Jewish opponents.”** (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 233).

- 3- **John** – The name “John” is translated from the Greek word “Ἰωάννης” or “Iōannēs”. Translated literally it means “Jehovah is a gracious giver”. The name is Hebrew in origin being translated from the Hebrew word “יְחִיָּה” or “Yowchanan”. The Hebrew word means “Johovah has graced”.



John the Baptist, as we have come to know him, was in actuality, John bar Zacharias. He was the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth. Elisabeth was related to Mary. The scriptures say that they were cousins, though the Greek word used for cousins can be used for many familial relationships. Barclay wrote, **“Jesus and John were blood relations. And Origen speaks of a tradition which says that Jesus and John closely resembled each other in appearance.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 106).

We know nothing of the childhood interactions between John and Jesus, if there were any at all. Even so, there was an obvious bond and love between the two men.

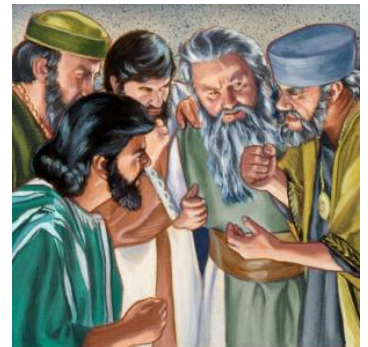
John was raised to fulfill a very specific mission here on earth. He held the Priesthood of God, specifically the Aaronic Priesthood, and was undoubtedly prepared by the divine majesty of heaven. He was naturally seen as a great Rabbi. Like the Pharisees, he taught of eternal life, resurrection, pre-mortal existence, and the existence of angels. He had all the qualities of a Rabbi, and therefore many flocked to him. Elder McConkie wrote, John had disciples, **“for their master was cut in the Pharisaic mold, and had in fact been sent to wind up the affairs of the dying dispensation of Mosaic formalisms – partook of some of the characteristics of their Pharisaic kinsmen. They fasted – perhaps as religiously as the Pharisees themselves, for the last accepted adherents to the old order were expected to live that law to the full, that it might be fulfilled in glory as the day approached when it would be replaced in full by the new gospel order.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 37).

Like the Pharisees, John led his disciples with strict adherence to the Law. They had become accustomed to a very Jewish approach to discipleship. Jesus, however, introduced an element of mercy, understanding a deep spiritual learning into discipleship. No longer were rites to be performed in robotic fashion, but with understanding and with spiritual change. The Jews saw the rites as the end of religious observance, while Jesus taught that the rites were a means to obtain something much greater; spiritual renewal. This was a hard transition for some of John's disciples. Even though John's doctrines aligned perfectly with those of Jesus, his teachings were still preparatory. He taught baptism and that the one that followed after him would teach things of the spirit. The transition became even more challenging for John's disciples now that **“John was in prison; but many of those who had been drawn to his baptism, and had professed discipleship to him, still clung to his teachings, and failed to see that the Greater One of whom he had testified was then ministering amongst them. The Baptist had been a scrupulous observer of the law; his strict asceticism vied with the rigor of Pharisaic profession. His non-progressive disciples, now left without a leader, naturally fell in with the Pharisees. Some of John's disciples came to Jesus, and questioned Him concerning His seeming indifference in the matter of fasting.”** (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 156). This attitude seems to exist even today. Many members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Days Saints make the covenants of baptism, and enter the church, but fail to fully grasp the spiritual blessings that await them if they continue down the path of spiritual change. Like John's disciples, they have found the right path but failed to continue down it.

The disciples of John were never misled as to who he was and what is mission entailed. John consistently taught that the Messiah would come after him. He taught that his role would naturally have to decrease so that the work of salvation could continue. In fact, when Jesus appeared on the scene John directed his disciple to follow Jesus. Such a directive would have been unheard of amongst the Jews. A great Rabbi would not have directed his students to follow after another master, but so it was with John. **“His work of proclaiming the way before the Lord was almost over. He had introduced the Messiah to Israel, had taught that salvation was in Christ only, and had commanded all men to follow him. Yet some of John's disciples, now leaderless and encouraged in their doubts and uncertainties by the Pharisees, had failed to catch the full version of the Baptist's direction to forsake him and follow Jesus. Knowing John's ascetic manner of living, and seeing Jesus feasting at Matthew's table, they were perturbed and perplexed.”** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary - The Gospels, Volume 1, Bruce R. McConkie, page 185).

- 4- **Pharisees** – The term “Pharisees” is translated from the Greek word “Φαρισαῖος” or “Pharisaios”. The word is a transliteration of the Hebrew word פְּרִישׁ “ or “parash”. Translated literally the name means “separated one”. The Pharisees became self-proclaimed figures of righteousness. **“They were also known as chasidim, meaning ‘loved of God’ or ‘loyal to God’. They were found everywhere in Palestine.”** (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, General Editor Merrill C. Tenney, Page 647).

We have covered the background the Pharisees in previous chapters. We won't cover that information again, rather we will summarize by saying, **“of the three predominant societies of Judaism at the time of Christ – Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes – the Pharisees were by far the most influential. The origin of this most strict sect of the Jews is shrouded in some obscurity, but it is believed the organization came out of the Maccabean revolt (165 B.C.). There was, however, a group of Jews resembling the Pharisees as far back as the Babylonian Captivity.”** (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary,



General Editor Merrill C. Tenney, Page 647). There were approximately 6,000 Pharisees at the time of Jesus. While the Sadducees largely controlled the Temple, the Pharisees controlled the synagogues that dotted the land. The Temple was more lucrative, but the real power lied in the control of the synagogues. It was there that people could be influenced and controlled. **“It was with the Pharisees as it is with Christendom today; they thought their religion was true; they were amply supplied with ritualistic performances; they had a form of godliness, but denied the power thereof; outwardly they kept the law, but inwardly they were without the Spirit; pure religion and undefiled was not theirs.”** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary - The Gospels, Volume 1, Bruce R. McConkie, page 186).

The Pharisees saw fasting as a ritual, rather than a tool used to increase one's spiritual connection with heaven. The Pharisees took hold of fasting and required that it be done every Monday and Thursday. **“The trouble about the Pharisees was that in far too many cases their fasting was for self-display. It was to call the attention of men to their goodness. They actually whitened their faces and went about with disheveled garments on their fast days so that no one could miss the fact that they were fasting and so that everyone would see and admire their devotion. It was to call the attention of God to their piety. They felt that this special act of extra piety would bring them to the notice of God. Their fasting was a ritual and a self-displaying ritual at that. To be of any value, fasting must not be the result of a ritual; it must be the expression of a feeling in the heart.”** (The Gospel of Mark, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 59).

- 5- **fast** – The word “fast” is translated from the Greek word “νηστεύω” or “nēsteuō”. It means to abstain as a religious exercise from food and drink: either entirely, if the fast lasted but a single day, or from customary and choice nourishment, if it continued several days.

Apparently, there was an established fast day among the Jews. It may have been a Holy Day or one of the days during the week reserved for fasting, typically Monday or Thursday. **“Mark's language at this point suggests that the incident took place during one of the statutory periods of fasting.”** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 107), maybe even a Holy day, like the Day of Atonement. The calendar, however, would place the event closer to the Passover. **“A. H. McNeile suggests that this incident may have taken place when the autumn rains had not fallen, and a public fast had been ordained.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 343). This also conflicts with the chronology of events. It is most likely that this chapter takes place in the spring. Even so, all faithful followers of the Jewish faith would have been honoring the fast on this day. Most especially, disciples or students of the law would have honored this sacred rite.



The Pharisees and the disciples of John saw the disciples of Jesus apparently eating during the fast. This caused them concern and question. **“The Savior certainly recognized the need for this principle, for after His baptism”** we finding Him fasting for 40 days. (General Conference, “The Law of the Fast”, L. Tom Perry, April, 1986). So why is fasting such a big deal?

Returning to our Father in Heaven is a task requiring humility and a willingness to sacrifice the things of mortality in favor of the things of eternal life. Elder Maxwell taught, **“Let us acknowledge that the strait and narrow path, though clearly marked, is a path, not a freeway nor an escalator. Indeed, there are times when the only way the strait and narrow path can be followed is on one's knees!”** (General Conference, “A Brother Offended”, Neal A. Maxwell, April, 1982). Elder Maxwell is alluding to the fact that the strait and narrow path requires divine guidance that can only be acquired through acts of humility.

One of the tools that Heavenly Father has given His children to help humble them, and position them for divine guidance is the act of fasting. Fasting is the act of abstaining from food and drink for a set period of time. Most fasts are for 24 hours, skipping 2 full meals. A spiritual fast is started with a prayer. The individual approaches the Lord in prayer and declares the intention of the fast. Such intentions should be in line with God's will and revealed truths. Fasting is not a way to change God's will, but rather for the worshipper to receive God's will and understanding. Often fasting is done to receive blessings at God's hand. Such fasting can bring down the powers of heaven, but we must understand that all blessings are predicated on obedience to the law upon which the blessing was based and that blessings comes as a consequence of God's will, not ours.

One predominate Bible Dictionary says that fasting was done **“to afflict the soul”**. (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, General Editor Merrill C. Tenney, Page 278). To many it is a time of torment and sorrow. Unfortunately, this sad description of fasting is a false doctrine and obviously defined by individuals who have never experienced a true fast. President Smith taught, **“Verily this is fasting and prayer; or, in other words, rejoicing and prayer.”** (Journal of Discourses, Volume 12, Salt lake City Tabernacle, George Albert Smith, April 6, 1868, page 197). Rejoicing? Yes, a true fast invites the spirit of the Lord into our souls and when we enjoy the spirit we feel spiritual rejoicing. Elder Wirthlin taught, **“Fasting in the proper spirit and in the Lord's way will energize us spiritually, strengthen our self disciple, fill our homes with peace, lighten our hearts with joy, fortify us against temptation, prepare us for times of adversity, and open the windows of heaven.”** (General Conference, “The Law of the Fast”, Joseph B. Wirthlin, April, 2001).

So what are the dynamics of a true fast? One of the reasons we came to earth was to gain a physical body. Another reason was to learn how to control the physical appetites associated with a body of flesh and blood. Our physical bodies crave and demand physical satisfaction, which often opposes the needs of our spirits. If we are not careful, the demands of our body drowned out the needs of our spirit. Without noticing, we often starve our spirits from any and all spiritual nourishment. A fast is an intentional denial of our



physical body's cravings so as to allow our spirits to deeply inhale spiritual nourishment. A true fast is not just a denial of food. A true fast also denies the body the worldly noise that diminishes or offends the spirit of the Lord. A true fast focuses our mind on the things of God. Logically, a proper fast begins by approaching God in prayer. Elder Wirthlin taught, **“We observe that in the scriptures, fasting, almost always is linked with prayer. Without prayer, fasting is not complete fasting; it's simply going hungry. If we want our fasting to be more than just going without eating, we must lift our hearts, our minds, and our voices in communion with our Heavenly Father.”** (General Conference, “The Law of the Fast”, Joseph B. Wirthlin, April, 2001).

The overall purpose of a fast is to allow our spirits the opportunity to govern our mortal bodies. It helps build a spiritual strength strong enough to overcome the appetites and temptations of the flesh. **“Fasting and prayer can help develop within us courage and confidence. It can strengthen our character and build self-restraint and discipline. Often when we fast, our righteous prayers and petitions have greater power. Testimonies grow. We mature spiritually and emotionally and sanctify our souls. Each time we fast, we gain a little more control over our worldly appetites and passions.”** (General Conference, “The Law of the Fast”, Joseph B. Wirthlin, April, 2001).

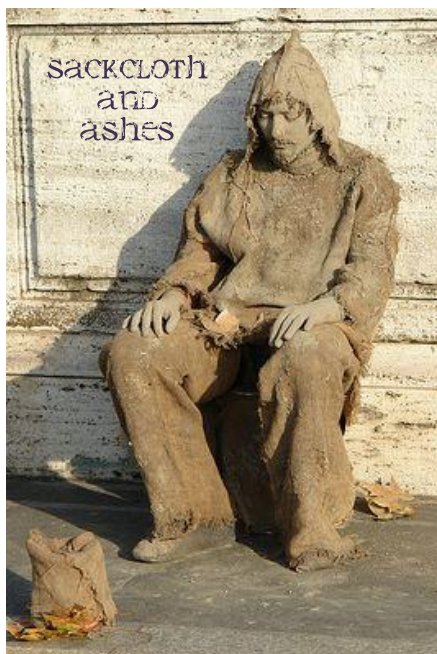
Fasting is not a modern innovation, nor is it a practice originating at the time of Jesus. Fasting is a tool given to man by God at the beginning of mortality. It was part of God's plan

for our salvation. In the pre-mortal council, fasting was part of the plan. Joseph Fielding Smith taught, “Fasting we may well assume is a religious custom that has come down from the beginning of time, and always associated with power. There are numerous customs and practices that were given anciently about which the knowledge became so common that their origin has been lost in antiquity; therefore we cannot give time or place where the first commandment on fasting was given. It was common in the most ancient times, and there are numerous incidents recorded in the Old Testament indicating that it was well established not only among the true worshippers of Deity but also among the heathen nations. All of this indicates the antiquity of fasting, which we may presume was revealed to Adam.” (Answers to Gospel Question, Joseph Fielding Smith, Book 1, Section 37, page 150). Adam, being cast out of the Garden of Eden, would have experienced a dramatic change with the addition of physical desires and appetites. Fasting would have been an obvious solution to combat these new challenges.

By the time of Moses, the Israelites had lost many of the plain and precious truths that God taught Adam. Fasting appears to have diminished in use and focus. “The only fast required by Moses was that of the Day of Atonement. Before the Babylonian Captivity it was the one regular fast. During this period there are many examples of fasts on special occasions, held because of transgression or to ward off present or impending calamity...” (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, General Editor Merrill C. Tenney, Page 278). Even so, it does not appear that fasting was a routine and common practice.

After Moses received the preparatory law, many of the ritualistic holy days were established. Among these days was the Day of Atonement. This day was one of the most important days among the covenant people. It was the only day of the year that the High Priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies. It was a day of special offerings, which taught the children of Israel about repentance, and atonement. It is deep in symbolic representations of the Savior. Sanders gives a wonderful summary of the day as follows;

“The rites of atonement were elaborated and all-inclusive. The various sacrifices of the Day purified the altar, the sacred objects in the temple, and the sanctuary, as well as atoning for the sins of all Israel. According to the summary of Shevu’ot, even sins punishable by ‘cutting off’ were atoned for. The high priest himself officiated. After sacrificing the regular daily burnt offering, he bathed and dressed in linen garments. The distinctive sacrifice of the day – besides which there were many others – were a bull and two goats. Standing between the goats, he cast lots that designated one of them ‘for the Lord’ and the other ‘for Azazel’. His first sacrifice was of the bull, the standard sin offering of the High Priest. The Mishnah attributes to him this confession: ‘O God, I have committed iniquity, transgressed, and sinned before thee, I and my house. O God, forgive the iniquities and transgressions and sins which I have committed...’ The High Priest slaughtered the bull. He then took a censer of coals and incense, entered the Holy of Holies, and put the incense on the fire. There was a debate between the Pharisees and Sadducees on when the incense was put on the fire). This produced smoke, which was originally intended to keep him from seeing ‘the mercy seat’..., lest he die’. The Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat above it had long since disappeared, and inside the Holy of holies was nothing whatsoever, except the foundation stone on which they had once stood. The censer with the smoking incense was put down on the stone. The High priest then went back through the veil that covered the entrance to the Holy of Holies and returned with some of the blood of the bull, which he sprinkled with his finger. He then went outside and sacrificed the goat which was ‘for the Lord’. As a sin offering, re-entered the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled some of the blood. He returned to the altar in the Court of the Priests and put some of the blood from each animal on the altar’s ‘horn’, then sprinkled more blood on the altar. This sanctified the altar itself. The goat ‘for Azazel’ was then brought to him. He put his hands on it and confessed ‘all the iniquities of the people of Israel’. A designated person took this goat, the scape goat, which bore the sins of Israel, into the wilderness. According to the Mishnah, the people cried ‘Bear out sins and be gone!’ as the goat was led out.” (Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE-66CE, E.P. Sanders, pages 141-142).



The meanings and teachings associated with Day of Atonement could easily be a course of study unto itself. The doctrines are of crucial importance, even imperative. Therefore, the children of Israel were commanded to fast so that they might be taught spiritually. They needed to deny the influence of their physical bodies in order to obtain spiritual knowledge. “The great lessons of the scriptures teach us over and over again how foolish it is for mankind to desert the ways of the Lord and rely on the arm of flesh.” (General Conference, “The Law of the Fast”, L. Tom Perry, April, 1986). Fasting, done properly, was designed to help the Israelites understand the doctrine of heaven.

Unfortunately, the Children of Israel lost sight of the true purpose of a fast. Fasting should be a very personal and private activity. It is used to clear out the worldly influences that cloud the mind. It is designed to open up communication with heaven. Over time, the children of Israel made fasting a public display. They took something that was spiritual and made it very worldly. Fitzmyer wrote, “In the Old Testament ‘fasting’ meant abstention from eating bread (food) and drinking water; it is often listed along with the ascetic use of sackcloth and ashes. The renunciation of self implied in it apparently contributed to a notion of self-achieved holiness, against which the prophets inveighed at times.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 598). In other words, the people participating in fasting began to dress in clothing that symbolized the poor (sackcloth) and the placed ashes on their being (another sign of poverty) that they might present themselves publically. They sought attention and recognition for their religious piety. They often wailed in public because of their fast so that the observers might recognize their sacrifice.

By the time of Isaiah, the people had strayed far from the Lord’s proper fast. The Lord followed His pattern when dealing with wayward children. He sent a prophet to correct them. Isaiah condemned their approach to fasting and directed them to fast properly. He declared, “Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to

loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" (Isaiah 58:3-7).

It is apparent that the Old Testament approach to fasting was centered on "Holy" days; however, there is also evidence that the righteous used the fast for personal reasons. King David used the fast when confronted with a dying child. The Old Testament records, "Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." (2nd Samuel 12:21-23).

By the time of Jesus, much of the laws established by God through Moses and the other Old Testament prophets had been corrupted and altered. This was also true of fasting. Fasting was now a religious rite practices twice a week. Barclay records, "The stricter Jews fasted on two days every week, on Mondays and Thursdays. It is to be noted that fasting was not as serious as it sounds, for the fast lasted from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and after that normal food could be eaten." (The Gospel of Mark, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, pages 58-59). Rather than seeking God's will, it almost became a process where they supposed that they could demand God's attention. Done properly, they believed that God would listen to them. "The idea was to call God's attention to the faster. Sometimes they even thought of it in terms of sacrifice. By fasting a man was in essence offering nothing less than his own flesh to God. Even prayer was systematized. Prayer was to be offered at 12 midday, 3 p.m. and 6 p.m." (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 66). The idea of clearing away the demands of the flesh so that the faster could listen to the voice of the Lord seems to have been lost. It was now about gaining personal attention, both from the general public and from God Himself.

Probably the best source in understanding how the Jews viewed fasting at the time of Jesus would be to read the oral law. The Mishnah records;

- 2:1 A. The manner of fasting: how [was it done]?
B. They bring forth the ark (which house the scrolls of the law) into the street of the town and put wood ashes on
(1) the ark
(2) the head of the patriarch, and
(3) the head of the court.
C. And each person puts ashes on his head.
D. The eldest among them makes a speech of admonition: 'Our brothers, concerning the people of Ninevah it is not said, 'And God saw their sackcloth and their fasting' but, And God saw their deeds, for they repented from their evil way (Jonah 3:10).
E. 'And in prophetic tradition it is said, Rend your heart and not your garments (Joel 2:13).'
- 2:2 A. They arise for prayer.
B. They bring down before the ark and experienced elder, who has children, and whose cupboard [house] is empty, so that his heart should be wholly in the prayer.
C. And he says before them twenty-four blessings:
D. the eighteen said every day, and he adds six more to them."

(The Mishnah: A New Translation, Translated by Jacob Neusner, pages 308-309).

It is evident that the sacred fast had become somewhat of an open spectacle. Pomp and circumstance replaced the sacred and reverent. It would appear that the fast had maybe even a parade like quality to it. Even so, "to the Jew almsgiving, prayer and fasting were the three great works of the religious life..." (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 343). There are some traditions that tell of Pharisees fasting as much as four times a week as an outward display of their righteousness. Abrahams writes, "Some Mishnaic texts, at an earlier period, while the Temple was in existence, the delegation of Israelites who were appointed in association with the priests officiating in Jerusalem, remained in their cities fasted four times a week during their sacrificial term; but this passage is missing in the best texts and cannot therefore be relied upon." (Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, First series, Cambridge, I. Abrahams, page 124).

The Jews as a whole honored fasting as a pillar of their religion. The Pharisees didn't have any special association with fasting, but they defined it as an essential rite. "It is not clear that the Pharisees' fasting was different from that of other Jews, but fasting was part of the law, and the Pharisees saw obedience to this aspect of the law, as well as to other parts of the law, as a means of exhibiting righteousness." (The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ: From the Transfiguration through the Triumphal Entry, Volume 2, Edited by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment, , page 135). If any one group may be attributed to the emphasis, and frequency of fasting at the time of Jesus, it may have been the Essenes. The Essenes lived in the desert, in places like Qumran, and practiced a fanatical adherence to baptism, prayer, and fasting. Marcus writes, "This fasting may have been influenced by a similar practice at Qumran, although the evidence for the latter is indirect." (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 232).

If a true fast is the denial of the physical appetites, then it follows that it would not end with a gorging of foods and beverages. Such would be contrary to the purpose. A true fast would rejoice in the spiritual abundance, rather than the return to the mortal gluttony. Unfortunately, the ancient Jews celebrated the end of their fast as though the end was the benefit that they were searching for. Edersheim writes, "The Pharisees celebrated each dogmatic victory by a feast! What is perhaps the oldest post-Biblical Hebrew book—the "Megillath Taanith," or "roll of fasts" — is chiefly a Pharisaic calendar of self-glorification, in which dogmatic victories are made days when fasting, and sometimes even mourning, is prohibited." (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 134). In other words, the Jews celebrated the ends of fast periods with a feast, and to make a day truly great they prohibited fasting and mourning. They obviously misunderstood the nature of the fast.

The Jews that came to question Jesus about fasting came with a truly Jewish understanding of the fast. It was apostate in nature and lacked the proper connection to God's eternal doctrines. "Among Jews fasting was practiced for the expiration of sins, for penitence, and for mourning. Jesus' reply, however, makes a distinction. He does not reject the practice of fasting, but reveals that it will have its time and place in the new economy of salvation being



inaugurated.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 596).

After the New Testament period is closed, the dark ages settled in. A global apostasy from God covered the earth. The temple was destroyed by Titus in 70CE. Consequently, the Jews needed to transform their religion in such a way that it could exist without the temple and the sacrifices performed therein. Abrahams writes, **“Fasting as a penitential rite, was in the Rabbinical view, allied to sacrifice. But the idea only came to the front after the destruction of the Temple.”** (Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, First series, Cambridge, I. Abrahams, page 123). The Jews started to fast as a replacement for the law of sacrifice. What they failed to understand is that Jesus had fulfilled the need for sacrifice, and fasting was necessary in its own right.

As time went on, Fasting was corrupted even further. One such corruption was **“the medieval Jewish custom of fasting on the anniversary of a parents death.”** (Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, First series, Cambridge, I. Abrahams, page 123). Christians even developed a custom of self inflicting pain during a fast, literally whipping themselves as an additional sign of penitence and mourning. Fasting even became a perceived avenue to talk to the dead or part the veil. Abrahams wrote, **“From the Apocalypse of Baruch it is clear that in the latter part of the first century fasting was the ‘usual preparation for the reception of supernatural communication’.”** (Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, First series, Cambridge, I. Abrahams, page 124).

Today, fasting is done for a variety of reasons;

1. **For the Savior's return** – There are individuals and religions that pray and fast for Jesus' return. They long for a time when the evils of mortality are put to an end. **“This practice may have been connected with eschological hopes and even a desire to hasten the end.”** (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 233). There is absolutely nothing wrong with the desire to have the Savior return; but, we must understand that His return will occur according to His Father's will and plan.
2. **To Gain God's favor** – Some believe that fasting is a means to defer God's wrath or to gain His favor. Zondervan records, **“Religious fasting was observed as a sign of mourning for sin, with the object of depreciating divine wrath or winning divine compassion.”** (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, General Editor Merrill C. Tenney, Page 278). Such fasting is only true under specific conditions. Fasting is not a means to control God's actions. Rather it is part of a process that conforms us to God's will. If we properly conform, through real repentance, we will gain favor with God. At the same time, we defer the wrath associated with sin.
3. **For Healing** – We know that mighty miracles are always associated with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Even so, miracles are only possible when faith is present. Such faith is obtained through prayer and fasting. **“If we would be sober and watch in fasting and prayer, God would turn away sickness from our midst.”** (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Selected and arranged by the Historian of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints - Joseph Fielding Smith, page 326). He would perform mighty miracles and His hand would be revealed in our lives.
4. **To remove problems** – Many of us turn to fasting when life is not what we would like it to be. We fast in hope that God will improve our circumstances. One author wrote, **“Fasting was always thought one of the means of causing an alleviation of calamity.”** (Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, First series, Cambridge, I. Abrahams, page 123). We know that God loves His children, and listens to their pleading. He then answers their prayers and fastings in a way that best promotes their development and progress. This may or may not be the answer we were looking for.
5. **Protection** – When we find ourselves threatened or fearful we can turn to God for help through prayer and fasting. **“Before starting on his journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, a journey likely to be attended with danger, Ezra, thinking it unbecoming to ask for a mounted guard, calls a fast, and this is efficacious as protection.”** (Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, First series, Cambridge, I. Abrahams, page 123).
6. **To strengthen in times of trial and temptation** – Mortality is designed as a proving period. During this time, we are guaranteed to face challenges, trials and tribulation. At times, we need the reassurance from heaven that everything will be okay. At other times, we need divine strength to overcome. **“Fasting, coupled with mighty prayer, is powerful. It can fill our minds with the revelations of the spirit. It can strengthen us against times of temptation.”** (General Conference, “The Law of the Fast”, Joseph B. Wirthlin, April, 2001).
7. **To strengthen faith** – Mortality causes us to question everything of divine worth. All that is good and praiseworthy seems to be a regular subject of attack. **“In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, members are encouraged to fast whenever their faith needs special fortification.”** (General Conference, “The Law of the Fast”, Joseph B. Wirthlin, April, 2001).
8. **To increase self control** – When the enticings of the world become difficult to ignore, and our self control seems weak and inadequate, fasting can open the door to new strength. **“Fasting is also one of the finest ways of developing our own discipline and self-control.”** (General Conference, “The Law of the Fast”, L. Tom Perry, April, 1986). Before we can return home to our Heavenly Father, we must master self-control. The great philosopher Plato said, **“The first and the best victory is to conquer self; to be conquered by self is, of all things, the most shameful and vile.”** (Laws, Book 1, Plato, section 626E.). The very act of **“Fasting helps to teach us self-mastery. It helps us to gain the discipline we need to have control over ourselves.”** (General Conference, “The Law of the Fast”, L. Tom Perry, April, 1986).
9. **As part of the repentance process** - **“President Kimball taught, ‘To every forgiveness there is a condition. The plaster must be as wide as the sore. The fasting, the prayers, the humility must be equal to or greater than the sin.’ It is unthinkable that God absolves serious sins upon a few requests. He is likely to wait until there has been long, sustained repentance.”** (General Conference, “Finding Forgiveness”, Richard G. Scott, April, 1995).
10. **To be sanctified** – When we want to clear the evils of the world from our mind, the law of fast is a wonderful purifying agent. **“The Talmud speaks of the one who fasts in order that the spirit of purity may rest upon him.”** (Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, First series, Cambridge, I. Abrahams, page 124). The Book of Mormon teaches, **“Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God.”** (Helaman 3:35).

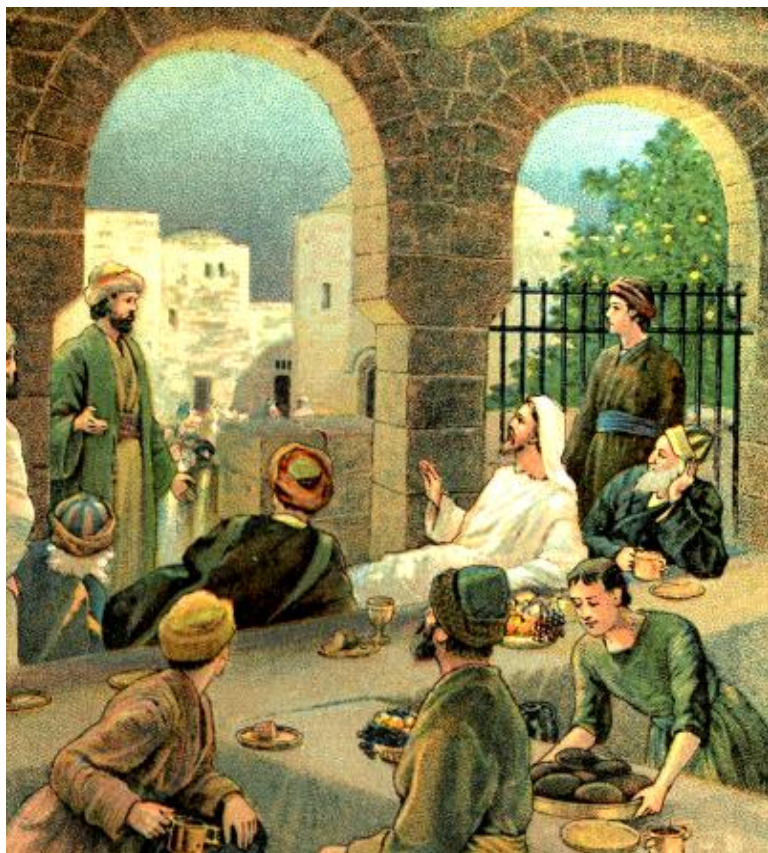
Fasting for the wrong reasons can cause confusion and doubt. When we fast seeking our will rather than God's, we have misunderstood the whole premise of fasting. Fasting, by definition, is the denial of our wants in favor of receiving and doing God's will. Consequently, a selfish fast will seldom yield desired results. This may frustrate the faster who assumes that God will grant his will if he somehow follows the divine formula. **“Mortals can never attain the unity that it is their privilege to gain without fasting and prayer.”**



Whether the Pharisaic fasts met with divine approval is quite another thing, however. Their fathers had been condemned for fasting for evil purposes.” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 38).

The true strength of a fast is determined by our actions after the fast has ended. The Jews fasted on the Day of Atonement. **“When these last sacrifices were over, the high priest again washed and changed his clothing, putting back on the white linen garments in order to re-enter the Holy of Holies and retrieve the censer. Still again he washed, put on ‘the golden garments’ (the full regalia of the high priest) and burned the evening incense. After a final ablution he donned his own clothes, suitable for wearing outside the temple, went home, and ‘made a feast for his friends for that he was come forth safely from the Sanctuary’.”** (Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE-66CE, E.P. Sanders, page 143). When we fast, we must return to normal life while following the divine direction and strength we received from the fast. We must feast upon the spirit we received during the fast. We must live so that the spirit might continue with us. **“If we live in such a manner as to receive nourishment from the true vine, into which we have been grafted, then we shall have power to overcome those sins that so easily beset us. There are a great many more things connected with our holy religion besides praying morning and evening, fasting, and paying tithing, as did the Jews. Our religion comprises the holy order of heaven revealed to man in the last days for the final establishment on earth of the kingdom of God, which will never be overthrown; but it will roll on and increase until the kingdoms of this world shall become**

subject to the law, government, and authority which rule in Zion.” (Journal of Discourses, Volume 6, Salt Lake City Tabernacle, Lorenzo D. Young, December 13, 1857, page 212).



Fasting is also connected with the giving of alms. This connection may seem unrelated at first, but the spiritual connection is obvious and straightforward. Fasting is denying the physical body one of its basic needs and appetites: food. Food is one of the body's basic pleasures. Similarly, material wealth is yet another one of the body's appetites and desires. Material wealth provides comforts and enjoyment to the body. It too provides pleasure. When we fast we deny our body food. A true fast takes the cost of that food, and gives it to the poor. In this fashion, we further restrict and deny worldly noise and influence making us more susceptible to the spirit. **“Paying a generous fast offering is a measure of our willingness to consecrate ourselves to relieve the suffering of others”** (General Conference, “The Law of the Fast”, Joseph B. Wirthlin, April, 2001), and consequently showing the Lord that we are willing to sacrifice the things of this world in order to follow Him.

A true offering, as a result of a fast, is valued at the cost of the meals skipped. As simple as this seems, there is much debate over what an honest offering is. Elder Wirthlin clarifies, **“How much should we pay in fast offerings? My brothers and sisters, the measure of our fast offering to bless the poor is a measure of our gratitude to our Heavenly Father.”** (General Conference, “The Law of the Fast”, Joseph B. Wirthlin, April, 2001). That being said, our fast offering should be all that we can muster. Our gratitude towards our Father in Heaven should be more than we even have. We should give a generous offering. Elder Wirthlin further clarifies, **“Be liberal in your giving, that you yourselves may grow. Don't just give for the benefit of the poor, but give for your own welfare. Give enough so that you can give yourself into the kingdom of God through consecrating of your means and your time.”** (General Conference, “The Law of the Fast”, Joseph B. Wirthlin, April, 2001).

We cannot buy ourselves into Heaven, but we can make sacrifices that qualify us. When we sacrifice our worldly means and pleasures to help another, we add to the process of Heavenly qualification. The process is

simple and yet astounding. **“Surely no man would think of such a simple yet profound way of satisfying human needs – to grow spiritually and temporally through periodic fasting and then donating the amount saved from refraining from partaking of those meals to be used to administer to the needs of the poor, the ill, the downtrodden, who need help and support to make their way through life.”** (General Conference, “The Law of the Fast”, L. Tom Perry, April, 1986).

Fasting is so important to navigating our way through mortality that living prophets have counseled us; **“Parents teach your children the joys of a proper fast.”** (General Conference, “The Law of the Fast”, Joseph B. Wirthlin, April, 2001). When we teach them the proper dynamics of a fast, we teach them how to access the powers of heaven. **“As we teach our children to fast, it can give them the power to resist temptations along their life's journey.”** (General Conference, “The Law of the Fast”, Joseph B. Wirthlin, April, 2001).

These basic facts make it highly improbable that Jesus hadn't taught his disciples to fast. His disciples understood the true nature of the fast. The unseen truth is that fasting was unnecessary for them. How can that be? Fasting is used to help us access revelation and spiritual direction from God, and the disciples literally stood in the presence of Deity: the Son of God. They had no need of fasting while He was among them, because they could access the words of Heaven by simply listening to Jesus. Of course, not every scholar agrees with me. Ogden and Skinner wrote, **“Although these teachings almost make it sound as if Jesus' disciples did not fast during his ministry, it is likely that they did periodically fast; how else could they prove the efficacy of their Lord's instruction that certain evil spirits ‘goeth not out but by prayer and fasting’?”** (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 249).

- 6 - **oft** – The word “oft” is translated from the Greek word “πολύς” or “polys”. It means many, much or large. The Codex Sinaiticus omits the word “oft” from Matthew's record. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 9, Verse 14, page 23). **“Luke has added the adverbial acc. (pykna). There is no way of telling how often or in what this temporary abstinence from food for a religious purpose lasted for John's disciples.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 598).

It is probable that the disciples of John who failed to follow John's direction to follow Jesus now adhered to the sect of Pharisees with John's imprisonment. The Pharisees would have been the closest thing doctrinally to John if one rejected the truth of Jesus. Consequently, they would have become experts at fasting. **“Fasting was a fetish with the Pharisees. There were times when they fasted twice a week, regularly, religiously, and with holy zeal, as they supposed. They paid tithes with such scrupulous attention to detail that they even gave a tenth part of the herbs that grew in pots on the windowsills. They attended to every sacrificial detail with such ritualistic attention that scarcely a single drop of blood was sprinkled other than at the appointed place.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 37).

The Pharisees, and most probably the disciples of John, were accustomed to frequent fasting. **“Private fasts would, of course, depend on individuals, but the strict Pharisees were wont to fast every Monday and Thursday during the weeks intervening between Passover and Pentecost, and again, between the Feast of Tabernacles and that of the Dedication of the Temple.”** (The Temple, Alfred Edersheim, pages 197-198).

- 7- **children** – The word “children” is translated from the Greek word “υἱός” or “huios”. It means a son. It is used generally to refer to the offspring of man. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “children” as “sons”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 9, Verse 15, page 23).



Marcus says that the translation is “literally, ‘the children of the bridal chamber’”. This corresponds exactly to the Talmudic expression *bene hahuppa*, which can indicate either the bridegroom’s attendants or the wedding guests in general. In Jewish law wedding guests were freed from certain religious obligations that were deemed to be incompatible with the joy of the occasion...when a wedding occurs during the holiday of Sukkot, all wedding guests are freed from the obligation of living in booths for the seven days of wedding celebration. ‘What is the reason? Because they have to rejoice.’” (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 233). This is the figurative message that Jesus is teaching to the disciples of John and the Pharisees questioning Him about fasting. Jesus is symbolically the bridegroom. The children of the bride chamber represent the disciples of Jesus Christ. When the bridegroom is present, the attendees of the bridegroom are free from religious obligation because they are expected to enjoy the bridegroom’s presence and the occasion of the wedding. They celebrate that the couple was able to seal the covenant. Similarly, Jesus, the promised Messiah, was in the presence of His people. The people represent His bride. The disciple’s represent the children of the bride chamber. Since they were in the presence of the bridegroom, they needed

to enjoy Him, rather than be distracted with religious rites. His presence represented the sealing of the covenant that they had anticipated.

When a couple was betrothed, two “friends of the bridegroom” were assigned to the couple to assure their virtue and purity remained intact. The children of the bridegroom protected the couple, especially the bride, assuring that she was worthy of the covenant she would be entering into. Edersheim writes, **“The term ‘children of the bridechamber’ is simply a translation of the Rabbinical ‘bene Chuppah,’ and means the guests invited to the bridal. In Judaea there were at every marriage two groomsmen or ‘friends of the bridegroom’—one for the bridegroom, the other for his bride. Before marriage, they acted as a kind of intermediaries between the couple; at the wedding they offered gifts, waited upon the bride and bridegroom, and attended them to the bridal chamber, being also, as it were, the guarantors of the bride’s virgin chastity.”** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 85). It is easy to see that the children of the bridegroom represent the Lord’s authorized representative here on earth. They are apostles, prophets, stake presidents, bishops, young men leaders, or any person called to be stewards over God’s children. The Bridegroom is Jesus, and therefore one might refer to the children of the Bridegroom as children of Jesus. They are specially called disciples or followers. Freeman clarified, **“The ‘children of the bride-chamber’; were the friends and acquaintances who participated in the marriage festivities. The expression ‘child’; or ‘children’; like that of ‘father’; an Oriental form of speech, and is designed to show some relation between the person to whom it is applied and certain qualities existing in that person, or certain circumstances connected with him; these qualities or circumstances being the result of that relation. Thus people who are brought together on occasion of a marriage-feast are called the ‘children of the bridechamber’; So when any passion or influence, good or bad, gets control of men, they are said to be the children of that passion or influence. Thus we have ‘children of wickedness’; 2 Sam. vii, 10; ‘children of pride’; Job xli, 34; ‘children of the kingdom’; and ‘children of the wicked’; Matt. xiii, 38; ‘children of this world’; and ‘children of light’; Luke xvi, 8; ‘children of disobedience’; Eph. ii, 2; Col. Hi, 6; ‘children of wrath’; Eph. ii, 3.”** (Manners and Customs of the Bible, James M. Freeman, pages 343-344).

- 8- **bridechamber** – The word “bridechamber” is translated from the Greek word “νυμφών” or “nymphōn”. It means the chamber containing the bridal bed or the bridal chamber. **“The Greek *huios tou nymphonos*, ‘sons of the bridal chamber’, is a Semitism, a translation of Hebrew *bene ha-huppa*. The use of ‘son’ expresses the close relationship of the wedding guests so designated to the groom because of the role that they placed in attending him on his wedding occasion.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 598). The translation means “literally, ‘the sons of the bridal-chamber’”. Jesus takes up the defense of his disciples. Implying that fasting is an expression of sorrow and gloom, something out of place in the presence of a bridegroom, whose moment of joy is at hand.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 598).

The life and atonement of Jesus Christ are the foundation of every covenant and ordinance associated with salvation. The crowning jewel of these covenants is the sealing of husband and wife under the Patriarchal order. Through this covenant, all the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are realized. Husbands and wives receive promises of exaltation and eternal lives. It is therefore that Jesus compares Himself to the Bridegroom and the faithful followers who enter covenant with Him as His bride. Barclay teaches, **“A Jewish wedding was a time of special festivity. The unique feature of it was that the couple who were married did not go away for a honeymoon; they spent their honeymoon at home. For a week after the wedding an open house was kept; the bride and bridegroom were treated as, and even addressed as, king and queen. And during that week their closest friends shared all the joy and all the festivities with them; these closest friends were called the children of the bridechamber.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 343). Through the covenants of marriage crowns of exaltation are promised.

John the Beloved used this same imagery of Jesus as the Bridegroom and the faithful Church members as His bride. He wrote, **“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These**



are the true sayings of God.” (Revelation 19:7-9). In another chapter he wrote, “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Revelation 21:2).

- 9 - **mourn** – The word “mourn” is translated from the Greek word “πενθεῖν” or “penthēō”. It means to mourn, to mourn for, or to lament for.

Being together with your loved ones is a time for joy and celebration. Separation from them is a time for mourning. So it is with Jesus. When He is among us, we rejoice. His absence causes pain and sorrow. “And who would expect the bridal party to fast at the wedding feast? But when the Bridegroom is taken from them, slain for the sins of the world, then shall the children of the bride chamber mourn and fast.” (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary - The Gospels, Volume 1, Bruce R. McConkie, page 185).

The figurative comparison between the relationship of a husband and wife, and the relationship between Jesus and members of His church is striking. They are both joined by covenant. They both sorrow when they are apart. “When two young people married in Palestine they did not go away for a honeymoon; they stayed at home, and for a week kept open house. They dressed in their best; sometimes they even wore crowns; for that week they were king and queen and their word was law. They would never have a week like that again in their hard-wrought lives.” (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 66). However, Jesus promises that such blessings await the faithful after their hard-wrought lives are complete.

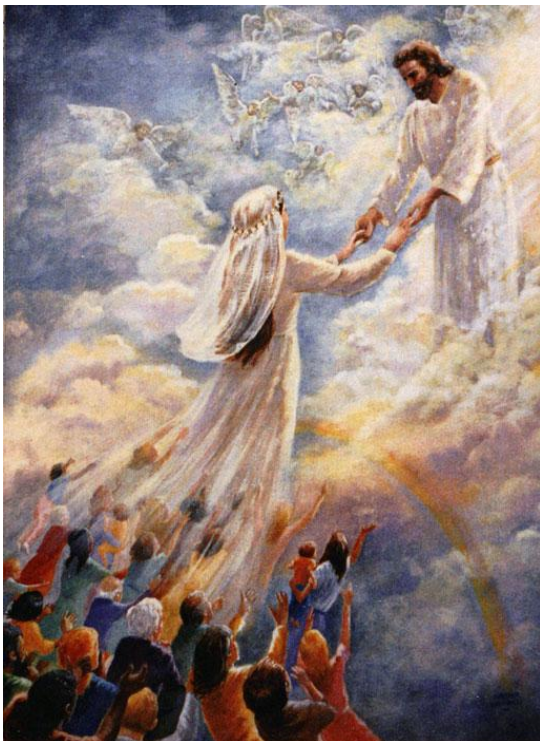


- 10 - **as long as** – The term “as long as” is translated from the Greek word “ὅσος” or “hosos”. It means as great as, as far as, how much, how many or whoever. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase “as long as” as “while”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 9, Verse 15, page 23).

As long as the covenant feast associated with marriage endures, the marriage party was to rejoice and celebrate. “The Greek indicates that the wedding festivities might last some days.” (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 107). The Jews were known to hold wedding feasts for a week or longer. Since the marriage covenant is the highest earthly covenant, it makes sense that the lower covenants would be halted in favor of the greater. Barclay wrote, “After a Jewish wedding the couple did not go away for a honeymoon; they stayed at home. For a week or so open house was kept and there was continual feasting and rejoicing. In a hard wrought life the wedding week was the happiest week in a man’s life. To that week of happiness were invited the closest friends of the bride and the bridegroom; and they were called by the name children of the bridechamber. Jesus likened his little company to men who were children of the bridechamber, chosen guests at a wedding feast. There was actually a rabbinic ruling which said, “All in attendance on the bridegroom are relieved of all religious observances which would lessen their joy.” The wedding guests were actually exempt from all fasting.” (The Gospel of Mark, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 59). Jesus represents all covenants, from the lowest to the highest. He is the binding strength of all eternal covenants. Without Him, they would have no lasting effect.

We have only reason to mourn when Jesus departs from us, either physically or spiritually. Without Him, we are spiritually dead, and eventually physically dead without hope of resurrection. The apocryphal Gospel of Thomas reads, “They said [to Jesus], ‘Come, let us pray today and let us fast.’ Jesus said, ‘What is the sin that I have committed, or wherein have I been defeated? But when the bridegroom leaves the bridal chamber, then let them fast and pray’.” (The Coptic Gospel of Thomas, Chapter 2, Verse 104). We fast regularly because we are cut off from His presence. “As long as” we are apart from Him, we should fast. We fast that the veil might be thinned and we might feel His divine presence. “Fasting as such is not to be condemned. In its place, and within the bounds set by Him who incorporated it as part of his eternal system, it is to be commended.” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 38).

- 11 - **bridegroom** – The word “bridegroom” is translated from the Greek word “νυμφίος” or “nymphios”. It means a bridegroom. In our modern day English we might translate the word as Groom.



“In the Old Testament or in early rabbinical writings is bridegroom used as a messianic title.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 599). The bridegroom is used as a symbol of Jesus.

In ancient Jewish weddings, the Bridegroom starts the wedding proceedings by leaving his home and traveling by foot to the home of each invited guest. Prior to the wedding feast, forerunners would have gone before and invited worthy guests. “Yea, a voice crying—Prepare ye the way of the Lord, prepare ye the supper of the Lamb, make ready for the Bridegroom.” (Doctrine and Covenants 65:3). When the Bridegroom came to your home, you were beckoned to follow. You brought with you a lamp, with oil, to lighten the place where the marriage feast would be held. Traditionally, the wedding feast was held in the home of the Bridegroom, or the Father of the Bridegroom. Guests traveled in procession with the Bridegroom leading. Invited guests were required to dress and act in accordance with the sacred covenant that was to be witnessed. “Every guest that attended the feast was required to wear a wedding garment (Matt. 22:12).” (Manners and Customs in the Bible, Victor H. Matthews, page 176). The wedding garment represented the worthiness of the guests. “None except those who have won the wedding garment will be permitted to eat and drink in the presence of the Bridegroom, the Prince of Peace!” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Selected and arranged by the Historian of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints - Joseph Fielding Smith, page 47).

The last home, before arriving at the marriage feast, was the home of the Bride. “In going from the bride’s house to the groom’s house, the bride allowed her hair to be loose and flowing, and she had her face veiled. Some of her own relations preceded her in the procession, and scattered ears of parched grain to the children along the way. There were demonstrations of joy all along the road to the destination.” (Manners and Customs in the Bible, Victor H. Matthews, page 174). Those who were prepared and worthy waited with anticipation for the arrival of the Bridegroom. Similarly, “The Saints will be gathered out from among them, and stand in holy places ready to meet the Bridegroom when he comes.” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Selected and arranged by the Historian of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints - Joseph Fielding Smith, page 92). Uninvited guests, or guests who were not properly dressed, were rejected at the doors of the feast. The location of the feast

was full of light. Every guest lit a lamp making the room extremely light. Hence members of the wedding party were the “children of light”. Those rejected were cast out into the darkness. The translation reads that they were cast out into “outer darkness”.

The mother of the bridegroom was traditionally in charge of the food and the comfort of the guests. The bridegroom had one assignment as it relates to the feast. He was responsible for the wine. The father of the bridegroom was typically the ruler of the feast. Victor Matthews wrote, “**The wedding banquet was presided over by the ruler of the feast (John 2:8, 9). It was his duty to take care of the preparations, and during the feast he would get around among the guests, and see to it that they lacked nothing. He instructed servants in carrying out all the necessary details. The expression, ‘children of the bridechamber’ (Matt. 9:15), used by Jesus, simply means the guests at the wedding. The governor or ruler of the feast returned thanks at the dinner and pronounced benedictions at appointed times. He also blessed the wine. It was customary to tell riddles at these feasts like Samson did at his wedding (Judges 14:12-18). During the meal mirthfulness prevailed, and the guests were expected to exalt the bride.**” (Manners and Customs in the Bible, Victor H. Matthews, page 176).

In various places in the Old Testament, the imagery of the bridegroom is used. Isaiah declares the Messiah to be the husband of Israel. He wrote, “**For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.**” (Isaiah 54:5). Jeremiah declared that the Lord was married to the children of Israel. He wrote, “**Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:**” (Jeremiah 3:14). In both cases, the prophets are connecting the Messiah with the children of Israel by a sacred covenant. Like a husband is bound to a wife by covenant, so is the Lord bound to His children by covenant.

As the disciples of John questioned Jesus about fasting, they were indirectly challenging Him as the Messiah. “**Jesus aptly reminds John’s disciples that it was John himself who had spoken of the Bridegroom.**” (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary - The Gospels, Volume 1, Bruce R. McConkie, page 185). The Jews would have readily recognized the symbolic association between the bridegroom and the Messiah. Jesus was making a divine proclamation. “**Jesus’ pronouncement, cast here in the form of a question, identifies himself as the bridegroom whose celebration inaugurates a new period. His disciples are the attendants who must share his joy on this occasion of inauguration.**” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 599).

In Jesus’ figurative teaching, the bridegroom will not always be with the bride or the children of the bride chamber. Albright explained, “**The bridegroom’s presence is emphasized as pointing to a time when he will not be there.**” (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 107). Of course this is foreshadowing the crucifixion and death of the Messiah. After such a time, the Apostles and disciples would have to navigate mortality without His physical presence. Then they would fast to secure His spiritual guidance.

- 12 - with them** – The term “them” is translated from the Greek word “αὐτός” or “autos”. It means himself, herself, themselves, itself, he, she or it.
- 13 - the days** – The term “the days” is translated from the Greek word “ἡμέρα” or “hēmera”. It means the day, used of the natural day, or the interval between sunrise and sunset, as distinguished from and contrasted with the night. “**Although ‘on that day’ could simply mean ‘then’, its significance is probably deeper here.**” (Mark 1:8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 234). Fitzmyer indicates that the word indicates the difference between the glorious days that they would enjoy in Jesus’ presence, verses the time after He leaves them. He wrote that the translation might read for example, “**days different from the joyous occasion of the presence of the bridegroom.**” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 599).
- 14 - be taken** – The term “shall be taken” is translated from the Greek word “ἀπαίρω” or “apairō”. It means to lift off, take or carry away or to be taken away from anyone. Jesus knew, even then, two years prior to His death, that He would be taken from His faithful and beloved disciples. Elder McConkie said, “**Then, with seeric insight – seeing what was to be more than two years hence; seeing that would be when one without sin hung on a cross between two sinners.**” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 38).
- 15 - then shall** – The Savior teaches the disciples of John and the Pharisees using two distinct metaphors. Both teach that Jesus did not come to earth to fix the Jewish religion, but rather to restore the doctrines of heaven to earth. Elder McConkie clarified, “**Jesus came to restore, not just to reform. His mission was to fulfill the old order and commence the new; he came to tramp out the dying embers of Mosaic performances and ignite the living flames of the gospel fire in the hearts of men.**” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 39).
- 16 - putteth** – The word “putteth” is translated from the Greek word “ἐπιβάλλω” or “epiballō”. It means to cast upon, or to lay up. It can also be used to mean to put on or to sew on. In the account of Luke, the Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “putteth” as “tears”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 5, Verse 36, page 112).
- 17 - a piece** – The word “piece” is translated from the Greek word “ἐπιβλημα” or “epiblēma”. It means an addition, or a patch. Albright suggests that the piece or patch was an “unshrunk” piece of cloth. This would add significant meaning to the Savior’s metaphor. Albright wrote “**The patch being unshrunk, will pull away (as it shrinks) from the rest of the garment. The Greek is pleroma, the noun from Matthew’s verb ‘to fulfill’ (pleroun).**” (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 108).
- Jesus’ metaphor works on several levels. “**John’s part had been fulfilled, and there could be no room for the new community and a community of John’s disciples, existing together in uncomfortable parallel.**” (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 109).
- 18 - new cloth** – The word “new” is translated from the Greek word “ἄγναφος” or “agnaphos”. It means unmilled, unfulled, undressed, unprocessed, or new. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the word “new” as “unfulled”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 9, Verse 16, page 23). The word “cloth” is translated from the Greek word “ῥάκος” or “rhakos”. It means a cloth, a bit of cloth or a piece torn off. Clothing symbolizes vocation and material circumstance. (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 34). “**In such wise did our Lord proclaim the newness and completeness of His gospel. It was in no sense a patching up of Judaism. He had not come to mend old**



and torn garments; the cloth He provided was new, and to sew it on the old would be but to tear afresh the threadbare fabric and leave a more unsightly rent than at first. Or to change the figure, new wine could not safely be entrusted to old bottles.” (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 156).

- 19 - **old garment** – The word “old” is translated from the Greek word “παλαιός” or “palaios”. It means old, ancient, no longer new, worn by use, the worse for wear, or old. The word “garment” is translated from the Greek word “ἱμάτιον” or “himation”. It means a garment of any sort. It is often used to specifically refer to the cloak or mantle and the tunic.

Old Testament usage of the terms garments, clothing and coverings have interesting figurative meaning. **“Jeremias points out that the cosmos is compared to a garment in numerous religious traditions... The imagery of the garment, then, is a natural one to use for an eschatological change.”** (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 234). Garments are often used to represent the covering or forgiveness of sin. They also represent one’s status or standing. It is also used to represent divine protection. In the case of this chapter, the Savior is using the term to represent the condition of the Jewish religion. It was not the same as when the Lord revealed divine truths to them. When He established the law it was like a new garment. It was adequate to the purpose, and had no flaws. Over time it became corrupt, represented as holes and worn edges in the garment. At some point it was not only not worth fixing, but most probably not capable of fixing.

The disciples of John and the Pharisees were seeing the Jewish religion as “God’s divine organization on earth”. They both recognized that there was need for reformation, but surely a few carefully placed patches would restore the splendor of the religion. Unfortunately, the patches required were incompatible with the state of the religion. Barclay explains, **“The word used means that the new cloth was still undressed; it had never been shrunk; so when the garment got wet in the rain the new patch shrunk, and being much stronger than the old, it tore the old apart. There comes a time when the day of patching is over, and re-creating must begin. In the time of Luther it was not possible to patch up the abuses of the Roman Catholic church; the time for reformation had come. In the time of John Wesley, for Wesley at least, the time for patching the Church of England was done. He did not want to leave it, but in the end he had to, for only a new fellowship would suffice. It may well be that there are times when we try to patch, when what is wanted is the complete abandonment of the old and the acceptance of something new.”** (The Gospel of Mark, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 61).

Jesus was restoring the “new garment” or “new and everlasting covenant” to the earth. **“The old world’s age has run out; it is compared to the old garment which is no longer worth patching with new cloth; the New Age has arrived.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 601). Jesus made no excuses, but rather explained in simple terms why a reformation would not work.



- 20 - **put in** – The phrase “that which is put in to full it up” is translated from a single Greek word; “πλήρωμα” or “plērōma”. It means that which is filled up. It is also used to mean fullness, abundance, and fulfilling.
- 21 - **fill it up** – There is no Greek word here. The word used in footnote #20 is difficult to translate causing scribes to add additional words for clarification. The idea here is that there is a hold in the old garment and a patch need to be place to “fill it up” or rather “cover the hole”.
- 22 - **taketh** – The word “taketh” is translated from the Greek word “αἶρω” or “airō”. It means to raise up, elevate, or lift up.
- 23 - **garment** – The word “garment” is translated from the Greek word “ἱμάτιον” or “himation”. It means a garment of any sort. It is often used to specifically refer to the cloak or mantle and the tunic. The symbol for a “garment” is closely related to the symbol for “clothing”. It symbolizes **“vocation and material circumstances, and in many traditional societies, religious affiliation, nationality, ritual status, age, and marital status.”** (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, pages 34-35),

Another way to look at the metaphor is that the garment represents exaltation and heavenly inheritance. It was a king’s robe, issued by the king of kings. As such, a patched up, mended robe loses its splendor and glory. Farrar wrote, **“He told them, in words of yet deeper significance, though expressed, as so often, in the homeliest metaphors, that his religion is, as it were, a robe entirely new, not a patch of unteazled cloth upon an old robe, serving only to make worse it original rents; that it is not new wine, put in all its fresh fermenting, expansive strength, into old and worn wine-skins, and so serving only to burst the wine-skins and be lost, but new wine in fresh wine-skin. The new spirit was to be embodied in wholly renovated forms; the new freedom was to be untrammelled by obsolete and long meaningless limitations; the spiritual doctrine was to be sundered for ever from the elaborate externalism of cancelled ordinances.”** (The Story of a Beautiful Life, Canon Farrar, page 267).

- 24 - **rent** – The word “rent” is translated from the Greek word “σχίσμα” or “schisma”. It means a rent. It is used metaphorically for a division or dissension. Here Jesus is referring to a rip or tare in the cloth. **“No one... takes a piece of new and unshrunk cloth to patch an old garment. If he does, on the first occasion the garment becomes wet, the new patch shrinks, and as it shrinks, it tears the cloth apart, and the rent in the garment gapes wider than ever.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, pages 344-345).
- 25 - **worse** – The word “worse” is translated from the Greek word “χείρων” or “cheirōn”. It means worse.
- 26 - **Neither** – The word “neither” is translated from the Greek word “οὐδέ” or “oude”. It means but not, neither, nor or not even.
- 27 - **do men** – The phrase “do men put” is translated from the Greek word “βάλλω” or “ballō”. It means to throw or let go of a thing without caring where it falls, to scatter, or cast.

Jesus is now having to point out the logical habits of men, in their culture, to help them understand the necessity for a restoration rather than a reformation. Unfortunately, the Jews were set in their ways. **“J. A. Findlay quotes a saying of one of his friends--“When you reach a conclusion you're dead.” What he meant was that when our minds become fixed and settled in their ways, when they are quite unable to accept new truth and to contemplate new ways, we may be physically alive but we are mentally dead.”** (The Gospel of Mark, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 62).

28 - new wine – The word “new” is translated from the Greek word “νέος” or “neos”. It means recently born, young, or youthful. The word “wine” is translated from the Greek word “οἶνος” or “oinos”. It means wine. Wine is a symbol for life, joy, thanksgiving, excess, and blood. It is used as a symbol of blood and sacrifice. (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 194).

Wine was a staple of life at the time of Jesus. We commonly trouble ourselves to differentiate between grape juice and wine. The Jews saw the two as one and the same. Grape juice was commonly referred to as “new wine”. To better understand ancient wine, we need to understand that there was no form of pasteurization or refrigeration. Grapes were pressed into juice that was immediately referred to as wine. Without a way to control or eliminate the growth of yeast, the new wine would immediately begin the fermentation process. Hence, all grape juice was wine, it was just a matter of how old it was. **“In those days grape juice was drawn out of a vat and put into wineskins (‘bottles’ made from goatskins) or earthenware jars. New wine – grape juice – was put into new bottles, ‘else the new wine doth burst the [old] bottles, and the wine is spilled’.** The gases coming from the fermenting juice as it turned into wine would expand and stretch the wineskin and cause it to burst if it was old and already stretched.” (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 251).

New Wineskin, Old Wineskin...What's the Difference?

Made from cleaned animal hides (skins -often goat), wineskins were used for carrying wine offerings, for travel and for storing new wine. As the wine inside continued to ferment, the skin would stretch to the point of losing its elasticity. If new wine was stored in an old skin, the skin would often burst from the pressure.

Grapes + Fermentation = Wine

1. Skins of grapes already have yeast growing on them.
2. As grapes are crushed, juice begins fermenting spontaneously.
3. Yeast turns the natural sugars in the grape juice into alcohol and carbon dioxide.
4. Fermentation process often continues after the wine has been stored in the wineskin.
5. The release of the carbon dioxide causes the wineskins to expand.



Newly filled wineskins were often hung and stored in tents from the poles.



Wineskins were sometimes cut and made from patterns for ease of transportation.

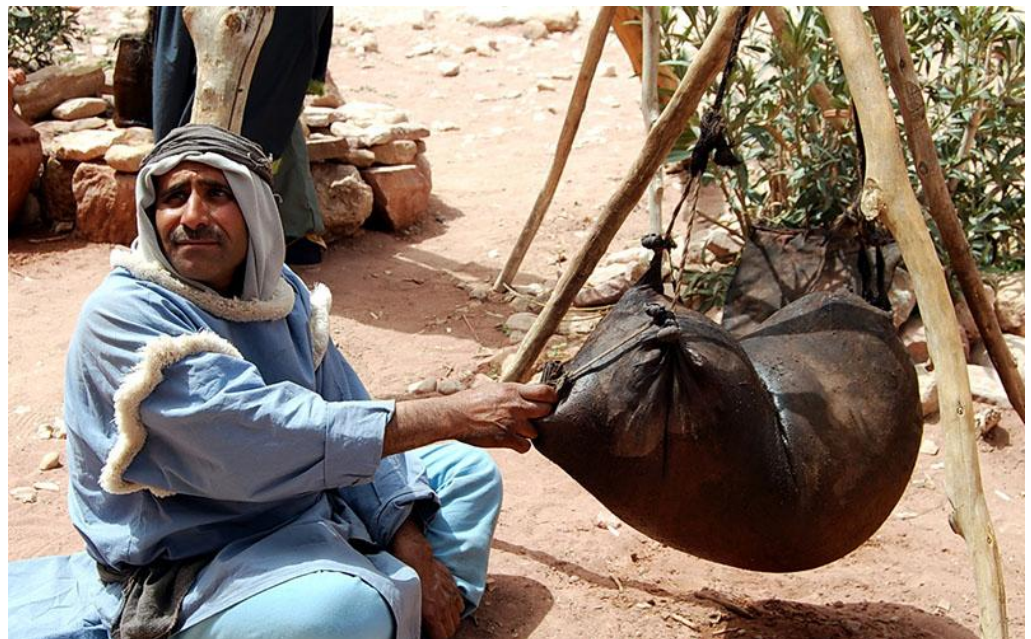
The Apocryphal work called the Gospel of Thomas give a slightly different accounting of this passage. It reads, “Jesus said, ‘It is impossible for a man to mount two horses or to stretch two bows. And it is impossible for a servant to serve two masters; otherwise he will honor the one and treat the other contemptuously. No man drinks old wine and immediately desires to drink new wine. And new wine is not put into old wineskins, lest they burst; nor is old wine put into a new wineskin, lest it spoil it. An old patch is not sewn onto a new garment, because a tear would result.’” (The Coptic Gospel of Thomas, Chapter 2, verse 47).

29 - old bottles – The word “old” is translated from the Greek word “παλαιός” or “palaios”. It means old or ancient. It also means no longer new, worn by use, the worse for wear or old. The word “bottles” is translated from the Greek word “ἄσκός” or “askos”. It means a leather bag or bottle, in which water or wine was kept. **“The use of bottles made from the skins of animals is very ancient, and is still practiced in the East. The skins of goats and kids are commonly taken for this purpose, and are usually so fashioned as to retain the figure of the animal. In preparing the bottle, the head and feet are cut off, and the skin stripped whole from the body. The neck of the animal sometimes makes the neck of the bottle; in other cases one of the fore-legs is used as an aperture through which the liquid may be poured out. The thighs serve as handles ; by attaching straps to them the bottle can be fastened to the saddle, or slung over the shoulder of the traveler. The Arabs tan the skins with Acacia bark and leave the hairy side out. For a large party, and for long journeys across the desert, the skins of camels or of oxen are used. Two of these, when filled with water, make a good load for a camel. They are smeared with grease to prevent leakage and evaporation. These water-skins, large and small, are much better than earthen jars or bottles for the rough experiences of Oriental traveling. Earthen bottles are, however, sometimes employed in domestic use.”** (Manners and Customs of the Bible, James M. Freeman, page 344).

30 - bottles – The word “bottles” is translated from the Greek word “ἄσκός” or “askos”. It means a leathern bag or bottle, in which water or wine was kept. **“Wine was kept in wineskins. There was no such thing as a bottle in our sense of the term.”** (The Gospel of Mark, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 61).

Larger wine bottles, probably better referred to as sacks, were often the entire skin of an animal with the openings and holes sewn shut. Fitzmyer teaches, **“Dehaired skins of small animals, usually of goats, were sewn up to form containers for liquids: for water, for milk, or for wine.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 601).

Such “sacks” were used for a variety of purposes. They were even used to make crude cheeses and yogurts. **“Container made of goat-skin, sewed up with the hair outside and used for carrying water, for storing wine, for fermenting milk into ‘leben’ or ‘yogurt’.** The fact that fermenting wine expands and stretches its container is used by our Lord in His discourse about putting new wine into old bottles. A new skin bottle would be elastic enough to stretch with the pressure of the fermenting wine, whereas an old stiff wineskin would burst.” (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, General Editor Merrill C. Tenney, Page 130). The Gospel of Jesus Christ will not conform to fit into worldly molds or structures. Like new wine, it must be placed



into a new bottle. It is not compatible with the doctrines of men. Every time the doctrines of men have been introduced into the gospel structure apostasy has set in.

- 31 - break** – The word “break” is translated from the Greek word “ρήγνυμι rhēgnymi” or “ῥ”. It means to rend, burst or break asunder, break up, or break through. It can also mean to tear in pieces or break forth.

Newly tanned leather is soft, supple, and elastic. Old leather, on the other hand, becomes hardened and at times even brittle. **“The strength of the newly fermented wine will be too much for the weakened and aged fibers of the old skins.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 601). Even a relatively new skin, which had been previously used, was inadequate. It had already been stretch and therefore lacked the ability to further expand. **“In the old days men stored their wine in skins, and not in bottles. When new wine was put into a skin, the wine was still fermenting. The gases it gave off exerted pressure on the skin. In a new skin there was a certain elasticity, and no harm was done because the skin gave with the pressure. But an old skin had grown hard, and had lost all its elasticity, and, if new and fermenting wine was put into it, it could not give to the pressure of the gases; it could only burst.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 346).

- 32 - wine** – The word “wine” is translated from the Greek word “οἶνος” or “oinos”. It means wine. In the old world, the term is used for grape juice whether fermented or not.
- 33 - runneth out** – The term “runneth out” is translated from the Greek word “ἐκχέω” or “ekcheō”. It means to pour out, or shed forth. It is often used metaphorically to mean bestowed or distributed largely.
- 34 - perish** – The word “perish” is translated from the Greek word “ἀπόλλυμι” or “apollymi”. It means to destroy, render useless, to kill, perish or be lost.
- 35 - new bottles** – The term “new” is translated from the Greek word “καινός” or “kainos”. It means new, recently made, fresh, recent, unused, or unworn. The word “bottles” is translated from the Greek word “ἄσκός” or “askos”. It means a leather bag or bottle, in which water or wine was kept.

The metaphor of placing new wine in old bottles extends beyond the gospel finding home within the Jewish religion. It also applies to us on an individual level. **“To put this into contemporary terms: our minds must be elastic enough to receive and to contain new ideas. The history of progress is the history of the overcoming of the prejudices of the shut mind. Every new idea has had to battle for its existence against the instinctive opposition of the human mind.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 346). In other words, we must be humble and submissive for the gospel to find home in our hearts and minds. Close minded, prideful individuals reject the gospel.

Have you ever asked the question, **“Why did both the Father and the Son come to a boy, a mere lad? ... The instrument in this work of God was a boy whose mind was not cluttered by the philosophies of men. That mind was fresh and without schooling in the traditions of the day.”** (General Conference, “The Marvelous Foundation of Our Faith”, Gordon B. Hinckley, October 2002). Indeed, **“Joseph Smith was a ‘new bottle’ who could receive ‘new wine’, free from the contamination of the philosophies and religious dogmas of men.”** (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 251). We too must maintain ourselves as “new” bottles, willing to expand our minds with the eternal doctrines of the gospel. We must exercise extreme caution as we become older and wiser, as we might suppose. It is the natural tendency of man **“as they grow older almost everyone develops a constitutional dislike of that which is new and unfamiliar. We grow very unwilling to make any adjustments in our habits and ways of life.”** (The Gospel of Mark, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 62). This stands contrary to the gospel plan which requires us to be ever growing and learning.

- 36 - preserved** – The word “preserved” is translated from the Greek word “συντηρέω” or “syntēreō”. It means to preserve, or to keep to one’s self.

The prophet Joseph Smith provides some clarity here with his inspired translation of the Bible. He dictated, **“Then said the Pharisees unto him, Why will ye not receive us with our baptism, seeing we keep the whole law? But Jesus said unto them, Ye keep not the law. If ye had kept the law, ye would have received me, for I am he who gave the law. I receive not you with your baptism, because it profiteth you nothing. For when that which is new is come, the old is ready to be put away.”** (Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 9:18-21).

- 37 - seweth** – The word “seweth” is translated from the Greek word “ἐπιράπτω” or “epiraptō”. It means to sew upon, or sew to. Jesus **“had not come to patch up Judaism. The gospel of Jesus Christ was to be a freshly made garment.”** (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 251).
- 38 - new piece** – The term “new” is translated from the Greek word “καινός” or “kainos”. It means new, recently made, fresh, recent, unused, or unworn.

The Jews had worn their garments in rites and rituals. They denied the spiritual workings of the gospel, and made apostate that which was spiritual. We maintain our vessels in an elastic spiritual state by doing the works of God, and harkening unto His words. Modern revelation teaches, **“Behold, I say unto you that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing; and this is a new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning. Wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works. For it is because of your dead works that I have caused this last covenant and this church to be built up unto me, even as in days of old. Wherefore, enter ye in at the gate, as I have commanded, and seek not to counsel your God. Amen.”** (Doctrine and Covenants 22).

- 39 - old** – The word “old” is translated from the Greek word “παλιός” or “palaios”. It means old or ancient. It also means no longer new, worn by use, the worse for wear or old.
- 40 - burst** – The word “burst” is translated from the Greek word “ρήγνυμι” or “rhēgnymi”. It means to rend, burst or break asunder, break up, or break through. It can also mean to tear in pieces or break forth. Figuratively, the word is used to represent an apostate condition, or broken state of existence. A religion fails when there is no room for new revelation or direction from God. When we become set in our ways, we surely don’t have room for God’s ways. William Barclay is a renowned Biblical Scriptorian. He is not a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and consequently does not have an understanding of the restoration. Even so, it is interesting to read his words regarding the religion and the propensity to hold onto old ways. He wrote, **“Throughout all its history the Church has clung to the old. What Jesus is saying is that there comes a time when patching is folly, and when the only thing to do is to scrap something entirely and to begin again. There are forms of church government, there are forms of church**



service, there are forms of words expressing our beliefs, which we so often try to adjust and tinker with in order to bring them up to date; we try to patch them. No one would willingly, or recklessly, or callously abandon what has stood the test of time and of the years and in which former generations have found their comfort and put their trust; but the fact remains that this is a growing and an expanding universe; and there comes a time when patches are useless, and when a man and a church have to accept the adventure of the new, or withdraw into the backwater, where they worship, not God, but the past.” (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, pages 345-346).

41 - spilled – The term “spilled” is translated from the Greek word “ἐκχέω” or “ekcheō”. It means to pour out, or shed forth. It is often used metaphorically to mean bestowed or distributed largely. The Church of Jesus Christ is not bound or limited by the traditions of men. No wonder God requires that we become as little children; humble and submissive. When we become set in our ways, we are incapable of taking on the new. It’s like having your hands full of garbage when someone hands you something new and spectacular. With no hands to take it in, something is going to be lost. Elder McConkie taught, “What, new baptism in an old church, new revelation in a dying kingdom, new doctrine in an apostate organization! Could Jesus add Christian ordinances, with their spirit and power, to the dead formalism and ritual of the Mosaic procedures? Could new wine be put in old bottles (Animal skins used as containers) without breaking the bottles and losing both the old and the new?” (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary - The Gospels, Volume 1, Bruce R. McConkie, page 186).

42 - marred – The word “marred” is translated from the Greek word “ἀπόλλυμι” or “apollymi”. It means to destroy, to put out of the way entirely, abolish, put an end to ruin, render useless or kill. Animal Skins represent the law of sacrifice. The old wine represented the centuries of animal sacrifice performed by the Jews.

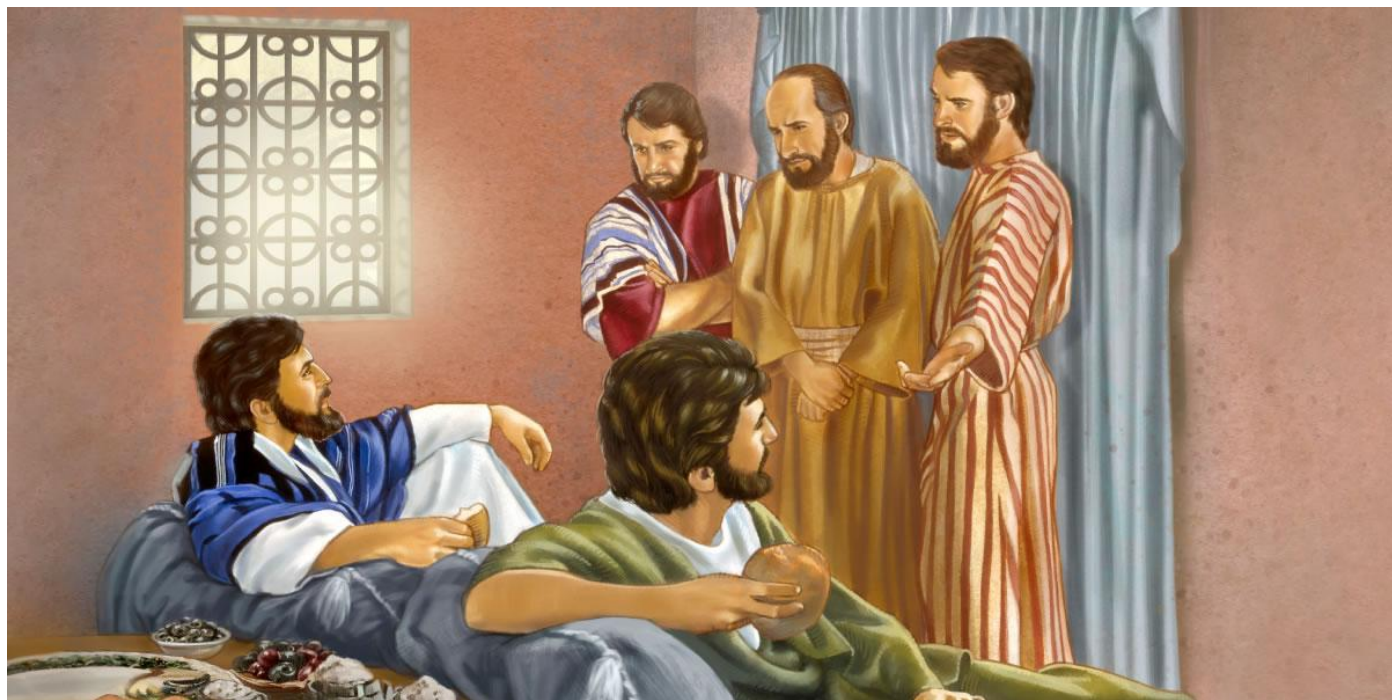
There is an interesting parallel that is worth mentioning at this point. The Jews at the time of Christ focused much of their religious worship and observance on the sacrifices performed at the temple. Animal sacrifices had been performed for 4,000 years, and were the center of all doctrine. It truly was an old rite. The Jews, as a whole, would never have voluntarily stopped the practice. To them it was sacred and essential. It was indeed the old bottle holding the wine. The wine represented the blood of the sacrifices.

Jesus was to be the last sacrifice. His sacrifice was the real deal, where the prior sacrifices were just in similitude of Him. The fruits of the animal sacrifices, represented by their skins, were not lasting. They were figurative only. In and of themselves, they had not the ability to save. Their skins were not pliable and their sacrifices not enduring. Jesus on the other hand offered the real deal. The fruit of His sacrifice was expansive. His included the sins of all mankind. His vessel knew no limits. His sacrifice rendered or abolished the need for animal sacrifice.



43 - often – The word “often” is translated from the Greek word “πυκνός” or “pyknos”. It means often, more frequently, or oftener.

44 - prayers – The word “prayers” is translated from the Greek word “δέησις” or “deēsīs”. It means need, indigence, want, privation, or penury. It is also used of seeking, asking, entreating or entreating God.



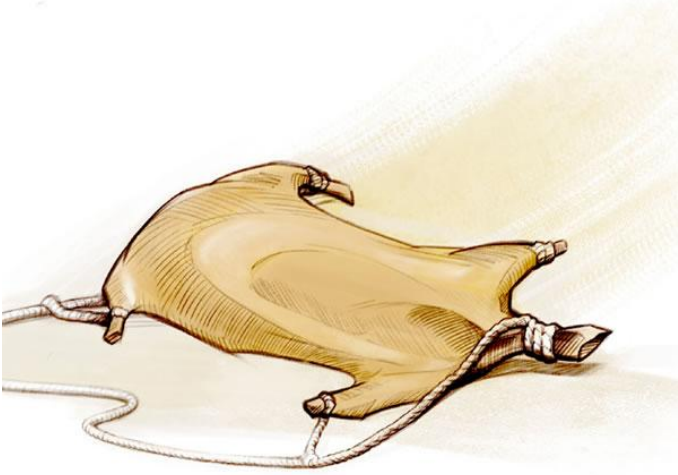
45 - eat – The word “eat” is translated from the Greek word “ἐσθίω” or “esthiō”. It means to eat, to take in food, or eat a meal.

46 - drink – The word “drink” is translated from the Greek word “πίνω” or “pinō”. It means to drink. Figuratively, to receive into the soul what serves as spiritual nourishment, strength, and nourishment leading to eternal life.

47 - parable – The word “parable” is translated from the Greek word “παραβολή” or “parabolē”. It means a placing of one thing by the side of another, juxtaposition, as of ships in battle. It is also used to mean a pithy and instructive saying, involving some likeness or comparison and having perceptive and admonitory force. It is also translated as a proverb. Fitzmyer says that this passage translates as “Literally, ‘he spoke a parable to them’. This is a typically Lucan formula... here it provides a suture to join the similitudes to

the controversy story; they will illustrate another aspect of the pronouncement, in effect allegorizing it.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 599).

Parables are powerful teachings tools, and were often used by the Savior. A parable often has multiple means, with layers of symbols and interpretations. This allows students on various spiritual levels to learn at their own understanding. A child and a Rabbi could hear the same parable and take away very different gospel truths. We won't debate which one is actually the intellectual. The **“Greek parable first appeared in 4:23 in the sense of ‘proverb’ (in which sense it would also refer to v. 39). Here, however, it is used in the more normal gospel-sense of ‘parable’ or ‘similitude’.** The variety of meanings for parable is to be attributed to its Old Testament background, since parable (used only by the Synoptic evangelists) and paroimia (its Johannine counterpart) both translate Hebrew masal in the Septuagint. The Hebrew word has a variety of meanings” ‘maxim’ (proverbs), ‘proverb’ (1st Samuel 10:11-12, 24:14), ‘obscure prophecy’ (Numbers 23:7), ‘parable’ (2nd Samuel 12:1-6), ‘allegory’ (Ezekiel 17:2-24), ‘taunt’ (Isaiah 14:4). Parable also translates hidah, ‘riddle’ (Proverbs 1:6).” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 600).

- 48 - new garment** – The word “garment” is translated from the Greek word “ἱμάτιον” or “himation”. It means a garment of any sort. It is often used to specifically refer to the cloak or mantle and the tunic.
 - 49 - new** – The word “new” is translated from the Greek word “καίνος” or “kainos”. It means new, recently made, fresh, recent, unused, or unworn. New also has an implication to purity and perfection. This is significant since the “new” and everlasting covenant existed before the foundation of this world. It is anything but new, in the traditional sense. It is however absolutely without flaw. It is a perfect covenant. In this way it is new.
 - 50 - taken out** – The phrase “that was taken out of” is translated from the Greek word “ἀπό” or “apo”. It means of separation or of origin.
 - 51 - agreeth not** – The word “agreeth” is translated from the Greek word “συμφωνέω” or “symphōneō”. It means to agree together, to agree with one in making a bargain, to make an agreement, or to bargain.
 - 52 - put into** – The phrase “must be put” is translated from the Greek word “βλητέος” or “blēteos”. It means that which must be thrown or put. **“This sentence emphasizes the need of compatibility.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 601).
 - 53 - drunk** – The word “drunk” is translated from the Greek word “πίνω” or “pinō”. It means to drink.
 - 54 - old wine** – The word “old” is translated from the Greek word “παλαιός” or “palaios”. It means old or ancient. It also means no longer new, worn by use, the worse for wear, or old.
- The old wine was the religion of the Jews. It was animal sacrifice and the Levitical Priesthood. It represented the preparatory law. It was never intended to be the end of spiritual progress, only the beginning. **“To reform Judaism was not the purpose of the Savior. Its fabric was too weak and its doctrines apostate. The fresh new gospel principles would not wear well with it. The Savior’s new kingdom must have a new structure, new ordinances and a new covenant.”** (The Days of the Living Christ, Volume 1, W. Cleon Skousen, page 202). He was the fulfillment of the law. His laws built upon the preparatory Law of Moses.
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- 55 - straightway** – The word “straightway” is translated from the Greek word “εὐθέως” or “euthēs”. It means straightway, immediately, or forthwith.
 - 56 - desireth** – The word “desireth” is translated from the Greek word “θέλω” or “thelō”. It means to will, have in mind, or intend. It also means to desire or wish.
 - 57 - new** – The word “new” is translated from the Greek word “νέος” or “neos”. It means recently born, young, youthful or new.

Another word for “neos” is recently born. One might reword that definition as born again. One’s old birth, or mortal birth, is inadequate when one considers the fact that there is more to eternity than mortality. Our mortal birth belongs to mortality. It has an end. What we all need is a spiritual birth, which belongs to eternity. It has no end. One cannot place spiritual rebirth into a carnal, mortal vessel and expect the blessings of eternity. A soul that is born again, must inhabit a vessel that is also born again. We must let go of worldly habits and live a different life. **“The Jews were passionately attached to things as they were. The Law was to them God’s last and final word; to add one word to it, or to subtract one word from it, was a deadly sin. It was the avowed object of the Scribes and Pharisees ‘to build a fence around the Law.’ To them a new idea was not so much a mistake as a sin.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 345). The gospel taught by Jesus Christ was not meant to repair what was wrong with Jewish beliefs and practices of His day, but rather to replace false beliefs and religious practices with a higher law.

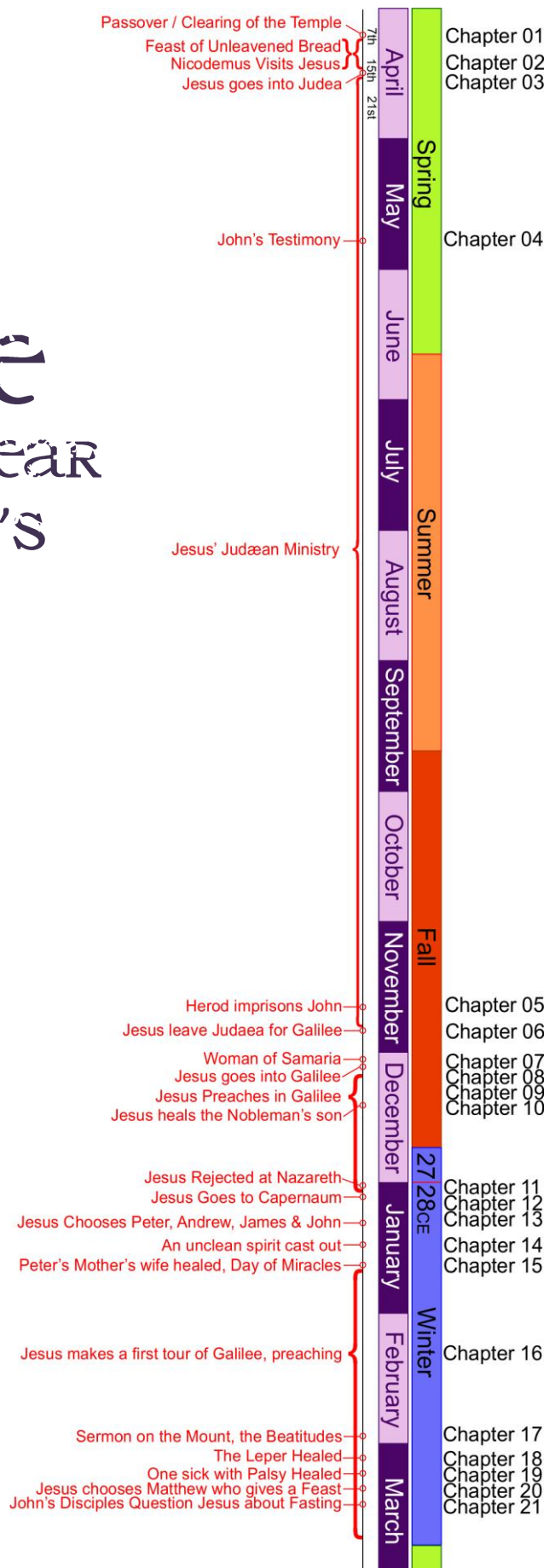
- 58 - better** – The word “better” is translated from the Greek word “χρηστός” or “chrēstos”. It means fit, fit for use, useful, virtuous, or good. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “better” as “good”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 5, Verse 39, page 112).

TIMELINE

FOR THE FIRST YEAR

OF THE SAVIOR'S

MINISTRY



The End

