

Feasting Instead of Fasting (Matthew 9:14-16)

Jesus has just been questioned for the third time in a row (who can forgive; why eat with sinners; why no fasting)

- Now, in answering this third question, Jesus uses **three metaphors**
- One of them is **central**, important, and from OT and the **key to understanding** the text (main point)
- The other two are merely **illustrations or helpful analogies** that Jesus uses to explain the main point

The main point is easy for you to get because you understand **weddings**—at least the bare essentials there of

- Bride, groom (cf. **bridegroom**), guests and a party
- That is all you need to know... and you understand that

John the Baptist's disciples understood that as well

- They are the ones asking the question
- The question is couched in terms of **fasting**... but it isn't about that—it is about a wedding (metaphor)
- A wedding that John's disciples were missing...
 - ... But they should not have been missing it
 - **John 3:20-30, NIV**
- Based on an ancient promise to Israel
 - **Isaiah 62:1-5, NIV**
 - The key is **verse 5**:
As a young man marries a young woman, so your Builder will marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so your God will rejoice over you
- **The point is** that one day, God would **draw near** to, **rescue** and **connect** Himself to His people in an **unprecedented** way
 - So that Israel's **being saved** by Him would be like:
 - The **dawning** like the sun
 - Bring new identity (**new name**)
 - Cause them to be realized as Gods **treasure**
 - **Desolation** would be replaced with **delight**
 - And it would be as beautiful, intimate and **joyous** as a marriage
 - **Isaiah 54:4-6, NASB**
- Israel lived in that **hope** and **expectancy (God as bridegroom)**
 - Broken relationship due to sin (supposed to be like a **marriage**)
 - And the only time they were ever **commanded to fast** was the **Day of Atonement** (humbling selves before God because of sin)
 - **Fasting** was (among other things) a way of expressing **remorse about sin** and **seeking reconciliation** with God
 - Cf. John's whole ministry
 - The practice of the Pharisees ("I fast twice a week")

So look what Jesus says to the question about fasting

- **How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while He is with them? (verse 15a)**
- I.e. That day has come!
 - Day of betrothal
 - Light has shone
 - Sins removed (no shame, humiliation, disgrace)
 - Identity as treasured bride
 - Delight and joy of reconciliation

Everything you **fasted** for is being achieved by and realized in the coming of the Messiah

In other words: **the Bridegroom has come; the PARTY has started!**

- You guys (John's disciples) were right on track with living expectantly... now **enter in joyfully!**
- They were **fasting** when they should have been **FEASTING**

The way they were approaching God before is no longer fitting—**the NEW WAY has come**

- It **didn't make sense** nor did it work in light of the bridegroom's presence
- **Verses 16 and 17** (**doesn't make sense**, nor **does it work**) (redundant metaphors)
- **Fasting** was mourning over sin and looking forward to the **Bridegroom** and the reality that brought
- But **Romans 14:17**, NIV and **Colossians 2:16-17**, NIV

How does this help us?

Old **wineskins** and **patches** that don't hold are ways of relating to God that **don't make sense** and **no longer work** (are not fitting) in light of the coming of the **Bridegroom**

The **patch** of trying to hide my sin

Isaiah 54:4a, NASB and **1 John 1:8-9**, NIV

The **old wineskin** of beating myself up about my sin

Isaiah 54:4b, NASB and **Romans 8:1-4**, NIV

The **patch** of trying to prove myself to God

Isaiah 54:5-6a & 62:2, NIV and **Ephesians 1:3-8**, NLT

The **old wineskin** of feeling accepted or rejected by God based on my performance

Isaiah 62:3-5, NIV and **Romans 5:1-2**, NLT

In light of the **Bridegroom coming and bringing salvation** and **us being the beloved bride**—**patches** and **old wineskins** (old ways of relating to God) **don't make sense** and **do not work**

- We have **something better**: It's like a **wedding** (rejoicing, intimacy, celebration)
 - J the B's disciples were **fasting** when they should have been **FEASTING** (missing it)

We sometimes miss it too (we fall into old religious modes—patches and old wineskins)

- In what ways are you fasting when you should be feasting?

But, Jesus did say (15b), "**The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast**"

- That is this time (post Ascension)
- Notice the word **fast** (not **mourn**)
- When we see **fasting in the NT** it takes on **a new dimension**¹
 - Fasting is no longer done in desperation about our sin and the hope of relationship restored
 - Fasting is now done in the delight that our sin has been removed and intimacy has been restored
 - In other words:
 - We do not see NT fasting because God is **somehow far from us**
 - But rather because God is **somehow near and present** with us
 - Confidence, joy, peace
 - It looks **back** to the **bridegroom** coming... but it also looks **forward!**

Though the **bridegroom** has been **taken away** for a while—**He is coming again!**

- Revelation 19:6-16 (The BIG wedding celebration and evil defeated)
- Revelation 21:1-5 (The renewal of all things; bride imagery)
- **Revelation 22:17**, NIV

¹ See Acts 13:2-4; 14:23