

## Everything Changes with Jesus

### Mark 2:18-22

**Introduction:** 1) One of my favorite verses in the Bible is 2 Corinthians 5:17 which says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold, the new has come.”

2) This verse is a reminder that Jesus did not come to reform us but to regenerate us. He came, not to improve us, but to make us new. This is true on a personal level. It is also true on the level of religion too.

3) It is popular today to say all religions are basically the same, that all roads lead to God. We call this “religious pluralism.” So there is a Buddhist way to God. There are multiple Hindu ways to multiple Hindu gods. There is a Moslem way to God. There is a Jewish way to God. And for us, there is a Christian way to God.

4) The idea that there is at least 2 ways to God, a Jewish way and a Christian way, has grown in popularity in recent years. This view is known as “Two-Covenant Theology” or “Dual Covenant Theology.” In a *RNS* article (10-12-90) it was stated, “Two-covenant theology maintains that God’s covenant with the Jews has never been abrogated and that Jewish people do not need to become Christians in order to attain salvation. Some proponents of this theology say the Holocaust mandated a new Christian attitude toward Jews because it involved a new revelation of God on the same status as the biblical revelation. The position has won acceptance in recent years in official bodies of such denominations as the Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Church of Christ.” I might add that popular T.V. preacher John Hagee of San Antonio, TX has been criticized for embracing “Dual Covenant Theology” and has made statements that leave him open to such criticisms. For example: “Trying to convert Jews is a

“waste of time.” Everyone else, whether Buddhist or Baha’i, needs to believe in Jesus, he says. But not Jews. Jews already have a covenant with God that has never been replaced with Christianity. “The Jewish people have a relationship to God through the law of God as given through Moses, I believe that every Gentile person can only come to God through the cross of Christ. I believe that every Jewish person who lives in the light of the Torah, which is the word of God, has a relationship with God and will come to redemption.” (Julia Duin, “San Antonio Fundamentalist Battles Anti-Semitism,” *The Houston Chronicle*, 30 April 1988, 1.)

- And, in a November 5, 2010 news release entitled *CJCUC Calls Upon Catholic Leaders to Discuss Religious Connection to Israel*, “The Center of Jewish-Christian Understanding and Cooperation (CJCUC) in Efrat and Jerusalem strongly protests the October 24 statements of Archbishop Cyrille Salim Bustros made at the Bishops’ Synod on the Middle East. His statements that “God’s promises to the Jewish People were abolished by the presence of Christ, “and that” the Jewish people are no longer a favored people” revive the old supersessionist theology responsible for so much Jewish suffering at the hands of Christians throughout history and deny the right of the Jewish people to their biblical, historical and covenantal homeland in Eretz Yisrael. These statements pain Jews all around the world, and they erode Jewish confidence in fruitful Catholic-Jewish dialogue....Archbishop Bustros has confused Catholics regarding Church teachings toward Judaism and the Jewish people; the Church’s older brothers and sisters. It is our prayer that this fraternal dialogue between Catholic and Jewish leaders produces greater understanding of each other and of God’s Word to His children, and to renewed respect for each of our holy spiritual traditions.”

5) The text before us addresses directly such an understanding, or better, misunderstanding, of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. From the lips of Jesus Himself, our Lord will make it clear that there is a discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity. There is no two covenant way to be in right relationship with God. He will make it clear that the new wine of Christianity cannot be contained by the old wineskins of Judaism. With the coming of Jesus it is a new day. With the coming of Jesus everything changes!

**I. Jesus came to bring joy not sorrow**

**2:18-20**

- Mark 2:18-22 is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 5 controversies Jesus has with the religious leaders as recorded in Mark 2:1-3:6.
- In 2:1-12 it was, “who can forgive sins but God alone” (2:7)?
- In 2:13-17 it was, “Why does He eat with tax collectors and sinners” (2:16)?
- The scribes and Pharisees could not “get happy” over a paralytic being healed and sinners being saved. Jesus said the wrong things and did the wrong things in their eyes. He was nothing but a troublemaker and by Mark 3:6, they are plotting with the Herodians “against Him, how to destroy Him.”
- The issue on the table is 2:18-22 is the practice of fasting. Once more Jesus, in their eyes, doesn’t get it right.

**Transition:** What, then, was His perspective?

1) Do not fast and mourn when it is time to celebrate.

2:18-19

- Two groups are fasting: 1) the disciples of John and 2) the disciples of the Pharisees. John’s disciples may have been fasting because John had been imprisoned or in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. The text does not say. The context favors the latter.

- The Pharisees had added as an extra-biblical tradition, fasting on Monday and Thursday, probably as an expression of personal piety and consecration.
- Perhaps they were outside Levi's house observing the party and celebration taking place inside (2:15-16). Again, they did not like what they saw and so they come to Him (Jesus) once again in an accusatory fashion with a question, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast" (v. 18)? Note the 4 uses of disciple in v. 18. If you are so spiritual, why do you not encourage your followers to live up to the high religious standards set by others like us?!

### Fasting

Fasting in the Bible generally means going without all food and sometimes even drink for a period of time (e.g. Est. 4:16), and not merely refraining from certain foods.

- I. In the Old Testament only one fast is specified as mandatory: the Day of Atonement (Lv. 16:29, 31; 23:27-32; Nu. 29:7). After the Exile when the Hebrews returned to their homeland, four other annual fasts were observed (Zc. 8:19).

In addition to these there were occasional fasts. These were sometimes individual (e.g. 2 S. 12:22) and sometimes corporate (e.g. Jdg. 20:26; Joel 1:14). Fasting gave expression to grief and penitence. It was a way by which men might humble themselves (Ezr. 8:21; Ps. 69:10). Fasting was often directed towards securing the guidance and help of God (Ex. 34:28; Dt. 9:9; 2 Sa. 12:16-23; 2 Ch. 20:3-4; Ezr. 8:21-23). Fasting could be vicarious (Ezr. 10:6; Est. 4:15-17). Some

came to think that fasting would automatically gain one a hearing from God (Is. 58:3-4). Against this the prophets declared that without right heart and conduct, fasting was in vain (Is. 58:5-12; Je. 14:11-12; Zc. 7).

- II. In the New Testament as far as general Jewish practice is concerned, the Day of Atonement is the only annual fast referred to in the New Testament (Acts 27:9). As noted, some strict Pharisees fasted every Monday and Thursday (Lk. 18:12). Other devout Jews, like Anna, might fast often (Lk. 2:37).

The only occasion when Jesus is recorded as fasting is at the time of his temptations in the wilderness. Then, however, he was not necessarily fasting from choice, though, it may have been. The first temptation implies that there was no food available in the place he had selected for his weeks of preparation for his public ministry (Mt. 4:1-4). Cf. the 40 days' fasts of Moses (Ex. 34:28) and Elijah (1 Ki. 19:8).

Jesus assumed that his hearers would fast, but taught them when they did so to face Godward, not manward (Mt. 6:16-18). When asked why his disciples did not fast as did those of John the Baptist and of the Pharisees, Jesus did not repudiate fasting, but declared it to be inappropriate for his disciples 'as long as the bridegroom is with them' (Mt. 9:14-17; Mk. 2:18-22; Lk. 5:33-39). Later they would fast like others.

In Acts leaders of the church fast when choosing missionaries (13:2-3) and elders (14:23). Paul twice refers to his fasting (2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27). It appears that there was a growing belief in the value of fasting in the early church (*NBD*, 364).

- Jesus responds to the question on fasting with an illustration from a Jewish wedding.

It is something of a parable.

Jesus = the bridegroom

Wedding guest = the disciples

Here is the point: I am here now with my followers. Like a Jewish wedding feast (or any wedding event), this is a joyous occasion where the bridegroom and his friends celebrate not mourn. Fasting would be inappropriate. Out of the question (vs. 19-20). His presence with them is a time of joy, happiness and celebration. It is not a time of mourning, sorrow and sadness.

**Application:** A relationship with Jesus is not a solemn, boring, joyless affair. It is a celebration. A spiritual banquet of joy and blessing! Like May 27, 1978, when I married Charlotte Tammy Bourne, it is a happy day filled with hugs, handshakes, kisses and smiles. Oh, we should be holy but not sober, moral but not legalistic, righteous but not stern. There is joy in Jesus.

**Transition:** Do not mourn when it is time to celebrate.

2) Fast and mourn when you consider what your sin cost 2:20

- There is a time for fasting and all that goes with it: “when the bridegroom is taken away.”
- I agree with those who see this as an allusion to Jesus’ death, the first in Mark’s gospel. There is going to be a time when joy is exchanged for sorrow and celebration turns to mourning. Mention of “the bridegroom [being] taken from them” is an abrupt and surprising image. In a normal wedding it is the guests who finally leave;

the groom and bride remain to begin life together. But Jesus interjects the alien thought of the groom being forcibly removed from the wedding celebration.

- Already there are storm clouds over Jesus' ministry. Those storm clouds immediately increased in the consternation of the scribes and Pharisees over Jesus' presumption to forgive sins in 2:10 and his consorting with sinners in 2:13-17. The reference to the bridegroom being "taken from them" reveals that Jesus himself is aware of the future consequences of the malice of the authorities (so 3:6). Once more there is an allusion to Isaiah's Servant of the Lord, as Mark intimates that Jesus, too, will be "cut off from the land of the living" (Isa. 53:8).

The kingdom of God has made a personal appearance in Jesus, but the final victory is far from realized. In order to overcome sin and death the bridegroom first must become their victim. The reference to the bridegroom being taken from the disciples, and their subsequent fasting, was surely a reminder of perseverance and faithfulness to Mark's congregation in Rome, itself the victim of Nero's depraved persecution. There will be days when Jesus is far from them, as was the Father from Jesus in his passion (14:36; 15:34).

- The bridegroom, our Lord Jesus, would be snatched away to suffer alone on a Roman cross to atone for our sins. He would die the death we should have died. He will pay the price for sin we should have paid.
  - He died in my place. He bore my wrath. He took on my judgment. God killed His Son so He would not have to kill me. Over my sin I should fast, weep and mourn.
- The cost was great. It was infinite.

**II. Jesus came to make things new not to perpetuate the old**

**2:21-22**

- The “messianic” wedding imagery now shifts to two crisp and concise parables. The connection is not to fasting but to Jesus and what His first coming means.
  - Jesus came to save sinners not the self-righteous (2:17)
  - Jesus came to bring gladness not sadness (2:19)
  - Jesus came to introduce the new not patch up or perpetuate the old (2:21-22)
- Here, in a clear and uncompromising way, Jesus informs us He came to make things new and not perpetuate the old. With the coming of Messiah, Judaism must give way to Christianity. Indeed it should, for it is in Jesus that the Hebrew faith finds its fulfillment and its completion.

1) False religion is like an old garment that needs to be discarded.      2:21

- Read v. 21
- Attempting to unite the gospel of Jesus and the old religion of Judaism is as foolish and useless as trying to patch an old worn out garment with a new unshrunk piece of cloth. When the new piece becomes wet it will shrink, tear away from the old, and make an even larger hole and a worse tear.
- The point is this just will not work and it is foolish to even try. With the coming of Jesus everything is new. The old was not bad but it is no longer usable. It has been replaced by something better. To continue to try and prop it up and give it a new face is useless. It is futile.
- When the promise has been fulfilled we don’t go back to the promise. To do so is to create and perpetuate a false religion; one that cannot save but only damn.

2) False religion is like old wineskins that cannot contain new life in Christ      2:22



- The 2<sup>nd</sup> parable is similar to the first (Read v. 22). In the ancient world, the skins of goats were stripped off as nearly whole as possible and partly tanned, so they could be filled with new wine. Their natural elasticity and flexibility, as well as their strength and sturdiness would allow them to be filled with new wine that would ferment and expand without bursting the wineskins and losing the wine. However, if you put new wine in old wineskins that had become brittle and weakened, when fermentation took place the gaseous expansion would burst the skins and both the wine and wineskins would be lost. Now, what is the point?

“Both parables are about the relation of Jesus and of Christianity to traditional Judaism.” The parables illustrate the radical new era in Jesus’ coming. Jesus is the new patch and the new wine. He is not an attachment, addition, or appendage to the status quo. He cannot be integrated into or contained by preexisting structures, even Judaism, Torah, and the synagogue. His contemporaries exclaim, “we have never seen anything like this!” (2:10). That is an understatement for the ages. He gives himself in service, rendering devotion and allegiance to none but God. The question posed by the image of the wedding feast and the two parables is not whether disciples will, like sewing a new patch on an old garment or refilling an old container, make room for Jesus in their already full agendas and lives. The question is whether they will forsake business as usual (like Levi) and join the wedding celebration; whether they will become entirely new receptacles for the expanding fermentation of Jesus and the gospel in their lives.

**Conclusion:**

- With Jesus and His life, ministry, atoning death and glorious resurrection, everything changes and it changes for the better and it changes for good.
  - There can be no compromise between Judaism and Christianity.
  - There can be no compromise between works religion and faith religion.
  - There can be no compromise between my old life and my new life.
- The wonderful Bible teacher Warren Wiersbe, former pastor of Moody Bible Church in Chicago says it so well, “Jesus came to usher in the new, not to unite with the old. The Mosaic economy was decaying, getting old, and ready to vanish away (Heb. 8:13). Jesus would establish a new covenant in His blood (Luke 22:19-20). The Law would be written on human hearts, not on stones (Heb. 10: 15-18; 2 Cor. 3:1-3); and the indwelling Holy Spirit would enable God’s people to fulfill the righteousness of the Law (Rom. 8:1-4).

By using these illustrations Jesus refuted once and for all the popular idea of a compromising “world religion.” Well-meaning but spiritually blind leaders have suggested that we take “the best” from each religion, blend it with what is “best” in the Christian faith, and thus manufacture a synthetic faith that should be acceptable to everybody. But the Christian faith is exclusive in character; it will not accept any other faith as its equal or its superior. “There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Salvation is not a partial patching up of one’s life; it is a whole new robe of righteousness (Isa. 61:10; 2 Cor. 5:21). The Christian life is not a mixing of the old and the new; rather, it is a fulfillment of the old in the new.

Jesus fulfilled the prophecies, types, and demands of the Law of Moses. The Law was ended at Calvary when the perfect sacrifice was once [for all] offered for the sins of the world (Heb. 8-10). When you trust Jesus Christ, you become part of a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), and there are always new experiences of grace and glory. How tragic when people hold on to dead religious tradition when they could lay hold of living spiritual truth. Why cherish the shadows when the reality has come? (Heb. 10:1ff). In Jesus Christ we have the fulfillment of all that God promised (2 Cor. 1:20). (*Be Diligent*, 28-29).