

“New Wine in New Wineskins”  
(Mark 2:18-22)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. One of the most difficult Biblical questions to answer is: how much of the Old Testament still applies today?
  - a. Many believe none of it does:
    - (i) They think it’s still useful because it helps to prove the Bible is the Word of God when we see how Jesus fulfilled it – that’s certainly true.
    - (ii) They also believe you can use the stories it contains to illustrate New Testament truth – that’s also true.
    - (iii) Beyond that, they only see it as having relevance for ethnic Israel.
  - b. There are some who go further and say that only the letters of Paul and those addressed to the Gentiles are for today, but not the Gospels.
2. But for you who know that the Old Testament is the Word of God and still applicable, you have a problem they don’t have.
  - a. How much of it applies?
  - b. Which parts do and which don’t?
  - c. That’s what we’ll want to consider this morning.

B. Preview.

1. Last week, we saw the Lord call Matthew.
  - a. He called him with a call that immediately changed his life.
    - (i) Matthew left everything and followed Jesus.
    - (ii) He also tried to bring his friends to Jesus by throwing a big party and inviting them to come and hear Jesus.
    - (iii) When Jesus calls you through His Gospel, it immediately changes your life.
  - b. This morning, we see this feast raised a question.
    - (i) It appears that this party took place on a fast day.
    - (ii) There were some disciples of John the Baptist present who wanted to know why Jesus and His disciples weren’t fasting.
    - (iii) Jesus tells them, and in the process, gives us some more insight into the relationship between the Old and the New Covenants.
2. We’ll see two things:
  - a. First, that fasting is still sometimes your duty in the New Covenant.
  - b. And second, that you need to exercise some care in applying the Old Covenant teachings in the New Covenant.

## II. Sermon.

A. First, with regard to fasting, Jesus tells you that this is still sometimes your duty in the New Covenant.

1. This is the immediate issue in our text - fasting.

a. John's disciples saw that Jesus and His disciples were feasting while they and the Pharisees were fasting.

(i) Matthew apparently gave this feast on a fast day.

(a) There was only one required fast according to the Law of Moses – on the Day of Atonement – but there were several others that became connected to significant events in Israel's history.

(b) We don't really know which this one was, and for our purposes, it really doesn't matter.

(ii) The real question is: Why weren't Jesus' disciples joining in this act of worship?

b. Jesus' answer is very clear.

(i) First they couldn't fast because of what was then taking place – the Bridegroom was here.

(a) Now was not the time for humiliation and mourning, but the time to celebrate. How could they fast while the Bridegroom was with them?

(b) How could they mourn when everything they hoped for was finally coming to pass?

(ii) Jesus wasn't saying that fasting is no longer important in the New Covenant: When the Bridegroom was taken away, then they would fast.

(a) Jesus would be betrayed, arrested, condemned, handed over to the Romans for crucifixion, and buried – in that day they would fast.

(b) He would be given back to them for a while, at the resurrection – He would be with them for another 40 days – in those days, they would again rejoice.

(c) But then He would ascend to heaven, and they and those who followed Him would fast.

2. This is the time you're living in, and that's why sometimes it's your duty to fast.

a. You are no longer to engage in ritualistic fasting – as they did under the Old Covenant, just because it was that time of the year – but when the situation requires it.

(i) When you need some particular mercy, you are to seek the Lord with fasting – whether for a physical or spiritual need, or for the needs of His church, or for some other particular blessing.

(ii) Fasting should be your response when you need the Lord's guidance, when you need His intervention, or when you just want to draw near to the Lord.

b. But there are also times when it's not appropriate for you to fast:

- (i) Such as when the Lord draws near to you in blessing, when He grants you victory over your enemies, when He answers a particular prayer, or when He pours out His Spirit in revival.
- (ii) When the Lord is near, you can't fast, even as the disciples couldn't fast when Jesus was with them.
- (iii) But during those times when the Lord seems to withdraw His presence and His blessing, that is when you should fast.
- (iv) Jesus is not abolishing fasting in general, but the kind of fasting that was done in the Old Covenant.

B. This brings us, second, to the main point, which is you must be careful how you apply the Old Testament Scriptures to the New Covenant. The Lord goes on now to describe something of the relationship of the Old and New Covenants through two parables: the parable of the new cloth on an old garment and that of the new wine in old wineskins – both of telling you essentially the same thing:

1. Jesus has not come to fix the Old Covenant, but to replace it with something New.
  - a. The Old Covenant was about to be removed.
    - (i) The old garment and the old wineskin represent the Old Covenant.
    - (ii) The new cloth and the new wine represent the new principles or teaching of the New Covenant Jesus was bringing.
    - (iii) In both cases, when the New is applied to the Old, the Old is destroyed.
    - (iv) It wasn't meant to continue – it was meant to be replaced.
  - b. That's what the new wineskins represent: the New Covenant.
    - (i) When the new is applied to it, or poured into it, both the wine and the wineskins are preserved.
    - (ii) New Covenant teaching needs to fit in the framework of the New Covenant – that's the only way it can be understood.
2. What does this mean for you?
  - a. It means first of all that though there are times when you should fast, you no longer need to keep the Jewish fasts – these have been fulfilled by Jesus.
  - b. It means second that you don't need to bring animal sacrifices to worship with you.
    - (i) The Lord wants you to worship Him in Spirit and in truth.
    - (ii) He wants you to worship through the sacrifice of Christ.
    - (iii) He wants your sacrifices of praise, not the blood of bulls and goats.
  - c. It means you don't need to keep any of the Ceremonial Law.
    - (i) This is what Peter meant when at the Jerusalem Council he said that they should not put a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither their fathers nor they could bear (Acts 15:10).
    - (ii) Except, of course, for those things that might offend Jewish believers.

- d. You don't have to become a Jew and live like a Jew in order to experience the free grace of God that is in Jesus Christ – all you need is to trust in Jesus.
3. But be careful that you also understand what this doesn't mean.
- a. It doesn't mean that you can tear the Old Testament out of your Bible and throw it away – most of it still applies.
- (i) Paul wrote to Timothy, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
- (a) Paul was referring to the Old Testament Scriptures, not the New.
- (b) How many times do the authors of the New Testament appeal to the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures to prove their teaching?
- (c) It has continuing authority.
- (ii) Jesus tells you in the Sermon on the Mount, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:17-20).
- (a) Does it sound to you like Jesus doesn't want you to obey the commandments in the Old Testament?
- (1) Certainly He fulfilled the Ceremonial Law, so that you no longer need to keep it.
- (2) He also fulfilled the Moral Law, so that you no longer need to keep that to be saved.
- (3) But He certainly didn't throw morality out the window or tell you that now you don't need to live holy lives – to love or to obey.
- (4) He can't set aside the 10 Commandments without violating His own holiness.
- (5) His moral standard never changes, and so you must always live by that standard.
- (b) Jesus also didn't abolish what is called the general equity of the Law – the principles of morality and justice that were required in the Old Covenant.
- (1) The sins that were forbidden then and were punished then are still forbidden and punishable in the same way.
- (2) Again, the Ceremonial Law is no longer in force.
- (3) But with regard to everything else, unless the Lord has clearly abolished or abrogated it, it remains in force.

- b. Jesus' point is something new and better has come in the New Covenant.
  - (i) That's why Jesus and His disciples were feasting rather than fasting.
  - (ii) He didn't come to patch up the Old Covenant, but to replace it with a better covenant – one that still incorporates the morality and principles of justice of the Old Covenant, but one that has a better Mediator, a better Priest, a better sacrifice, and better promises.
  - (iii) This is the covenant you are in, if you are trusting Jesus this morning.
  - (iv) If you aren't trusting Jesus, I would urge you to do so now.
  - (v) Why were the disciples of John so concerned over their religious fasting? Why were Matthew and the disciples all feasting? Because they understood that only by loving and following the Lord they would have eternal life.
  - (vi) May the Lord grant you that same heart and same concern. Amen.

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