

## **I. A Question about Fasting**

**Matthew 9:14-15** Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?" 15 And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

- A. John the Baptists disciples didn't understand why Jesus' disciples didn't fast when they and the Pharisee's disciples fasted often. Why was there such a difference between them?
- B. Jesus explained to them that at a wedding feast the bridegroom's friends would never fast while the bridegroom was with them. It was a time of celebration and rejoicing.
- C. He was obviously speaking of Himself and His disciples as the friends of the bridegroom.
- D. He then made it clear that things wouldn't always be this way. There would be a time when He would no longer be with them. And in His absence His friends would fast.

## **II. The Bridegroom Has Been Taken Away**

- A. We are now living in the days that Jesus explained that He would be physically absent. He said very clearly and emphatically that in that season His friends would fast. He was normalizing fasting as a way of life for believers.
- B. Fasting with prayer isn't super-spirituality - it's normal Christianity. It's a normal practice for believers in this age, as we live in recognition that Jesus is not physically with us but will be returning.

## **III. Noteworthy details about the passage**

- A. John the Baptist was the first one to use the phrase "Friend of the Bridegroom"(John 3:29). He did so by referring to himself. When Jesus used the same term He was referencing John's ministry.
  - 1. He was implying that His followers would live like John the Baptist; they would all be friends of the bridegroom.

## **An Invitation to Fasting**

**BILLY HUMPHREY**

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2. He was encouraging John's disciples who seemed to be wary of Jesus' identity as messiah that He was the messiah and John did indeed announce him to the earth.

B. He was identifying that there is a change in the way fasting is going to be practiced. Even the Pharisees fasted up to 2 days a week, and in several ritual fasts throughout the year. He was saying the days will come when they will fast out of love and desire instead of religious duty.

C. Jesus was intentional about using the Bridegroom language because He wanted His followers to be touched with hearts of desire and intimacy. He was setting the paradigm for New Testament fasting. We fast out of longing for Jesus as our bridegroom. Here and in Matthew 5:4 He described this type of fasting as "mourning". It's about the bridegroom being away from us, but one day He will return. We long for Jesus' presence and His return as a normal expression of our hearts to Him.

**Matthew 9:16** No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. 17 Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

D. Jesus connected this new paradigm of fasting and prayer with the new wine skin that would hold the new wine. He was saying that the spiritual violence of fasting and prayer is going to be part of the new wineskin that will be the new covenant. A wineskin holds wine, it sustains it instead of wastes it. The point is that a lifestyle of fasting and prayer enables a heart to be sustain as it's being refreshed by the Lord.

### **IV. Spiritual Benefits of Fasting**

- A. Humble yourself through Fasting (Psalm 35:13)
- B. Practical expression of spiritual hunger (Mat 5:4, 6)
- C. Place yourself in voluntary weakness (2 Cor 12:9-10)
- D. Sensitizes your heart to the Holy Spirit (Isa 58:11)
- E. Increase Holy Spirit activity, authority, and breakthrough (Isa 58:8, Mar 9:29)