

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew** 83- Hungering for God through Fasting- Part 4 Is Fasting Biblical? Is it Applicable Under the New Covenant?- Part 2

Church January 21, 2024

Matthew 9:14-17

14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, asking, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"

15 And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

16 But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results.

17 Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Now here in verses 16&17, Jesus gave a "Word Picture" about "new patches" and "old garments"; as well as "new wine" and "old wineskins". And, on the Surface- it would *seem* that Jesus was teaching about Fasting. Or the *distinction* between Old Covenant Fasting and New Covenant Fasting. Because Old Covenant Fasting included a Longing and a Grieving that the Messiah had NOT yet come; while New Covenant Fasting included the glorious Understanding that He has finally Come! And that is why Jesus said this in the first part of verse 15:

The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? ...

Now keep in mind what the Disciples and John (and the Pharisees) had asked Jesus,

Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?

So, two *opposing* things were happening here:

1. Both the Disciples of John as well as the Pharisees were fasting in accord with an Understanding of the Old Covenant
2. The Disciples of Jesus were NOT fasting- AT ALL

... which was just one more Issue that caused *both* the Pharisees and the Disciples of John to believe that following Jesus would cause a person to *ignore* “*Jewish Tradition*” as well as *disobey* the inspired and inerrant Words of God through Moses and the Old Testament Prophets.

We need to remember that, in addition to Jesus living and dying and rising again in order to save the Lost- Jesus was bringing the Old Covenant to a decisive End. And, at the same Time- He was fulfilling the Law of Moses and introducing the New Covenant to the World.

So, in addition to NOT fasting- neither Jesus nor His Disciples utilized the Sanhedrin Court; they did NOT submit themselves to the Levitical Priesthood; they did NOT sacrifice animals; they did NOT worship in the Temple in Jerusalem; and they did not follow the Wayward Teaching of the Pharisees concerning the Sabbath.

And all of this was very confusing to both the Pharisees and the Disciples of John. Because on the one hand- it absolutely looked like Jesus was *sinning* by NOT obeying the inspired and inerrant Words of Moses found in the Scriptures. And yet God was obviously honoring Jesus- because He was able to heal Diseases; cast out Devils; and forgive Sin. So, it was all so very troubling to those Jews.

And, of course, the Reason Jesus was doing all this was to usher in the infinitely superior Covenant; that was based on infinitely superior Promises; that was made real by an infinitely superior Sacrifice; offered by an infinitely superior High Priest.

And this was a huge Issue; and one that, most Christians know little or nothing about; and one that, 2,000 years later, the modern Jew STILL has a Problem with! So, most of the time, when the Subject of Jesus’ Birth; Life; Ministry; Death; Resurrection; Ascension; His ongoing Ministry in Heaven; and His 2nd Coming is brought up- all that the Jew sees- is a Man, who deceived people; and one who desires to *encourage* people to *disobey* Moses. And so, Issues like,

- The Sabbath (Sundown Friday to sundown Saturday)
- Animal Sacrifices
- The Temple in Jerusalem

- The Levitical Priesthood
- The Sanhedrin Court
- The physical Nation of Israel (as it was under King Solomon)

... are brought up as Issues that God gave to Moses- that Jesus and the Apostles taught and practiced *against*.

But now we need to ask, “*By what Authority were the Disciples of John and the Pharisees fasting?*” If the Patriarchs (Adam through Joseph) fasted at all- there is NO specific Scripture reference to it. The BEST I can find is in **Job 1:20**- when Job learned that his 10 Children were all dead; all of his Livestock has been taken; and all but a few slaves have been killed- whoever wrote the **Book of Job** (Jeremiah/Ezra?) said this:

Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped.

Now even though the **Book of Job** was written many years later- Job lived during the “*Days of the Patriarchs*”. And we know that because of two things:

1. Job’s Wealth was measured in Livestock and Land- rather than Money
2. Both the Sabeans and the Chaldeans were marauding bands who had not yet built themselves Cities

... both of which was true- ONLY during the “*Days of the Patriarchs*”. And so, when Job “*afflicted his soul*” in his Grief- he *probably* also fasted.

And Moses fasted 40 Days when he was in the Mountain with God receiving the 10 Commandments around 1,450 BC¹. But he had to have either received that Knowledge directly from God; or had learned it from the ancient Egyptians- because there is NO direct Command from God to Moses to fast until God gave him the Instructions about the “*Day of Atonement*” in **Leviticus 16:29&30; 23:27-31**; and **Numbers 29:7**. And so, the Divine Command from God to the Children of Israel to “*afflict your souls*” (**Leviticus 16:29&31; 23:27&32**; and **Numbers 29:7**) *probably* included Fasting.

But *however* vague the Beginnings of Fasting was- by the Time we get to the 1st Century- Fasting was *ingrained* into the daily Life of the Jews.

But when Jesus talked about “**new patches**” and “**old garments**”; as well as “**new wine**” and “**old wineskins**”- He was actually talking about two different

¹ Moses’ Fast was so severe that he didn’t eat any food or drink any water as he was receiving the Law from God (**Exodus 34:28**). And that tells us that God had to *supernaturally* keep Moses alive as humans simply CANNOT survive with water that long.

Issues- one involving Fasting and the other- NOT. Ultimately, Jesus was saying this,

The OLD CANNOT be associated with the NEW

... and that had to do with Fasting, yes.

But it also had to do with the New Covenant *causing* the Old Covenant to be **“obsolete and ready to disappear” (Hebrews 8:13)**

So, Jesus was saying that either you have the Old OR you have the New- but you CANNOT have both. And the “Word Picture” of new Patches being put on an old Garment; and new Wine being poured into old Wineskins serve to help illustrate that Point.

So, as I told you last time, this Passage is actually NOT about Fasting- per se. Fasting is simply the Instrument that Jesus uses to teach about the radical Distinctions between the Old and the New Covenants. But because He used Fasting to do that- it serves to help us to go through this.

And so, because Jesus and the Apostles taught against and practiced against those Issues- the Jews- almost unanimously- thought they were deceived and wrong about it. And so, to the Jew- the New Testament is right, correct, and “of God”- ONLY when it agrees with the Old Testament. And *wherever* the New Testament *departs* from the Old- the New Testament is in Error! And this is NOT my Opinion, dear friends, this is the *formal* and *official* Position of orthodox Judaism- and has been for over 2,000 years!

Now the Truth of the matter is that the New Testament *departs* from the Old in a *fundamental* Ways- precisely because Jesus FULFILLED the Law of Moses; and forever brought to a decisive END- both the Ceremonial and Dietary Parts of God’s Law. The moral Parts of God’s Law are STILL in force today- because they have to do with God the Father’s own, personal Attributes and Characteristics- which are eternal.

Now please allow me to illustrate what this means. From the very Moment when John the Baptist said,

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)

... anyone for any Reason, who sacrificed an animal was sinning against God. Now why was that? Because John the Baptist said this in **John 1:33-34:**

33 I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

34 I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

So, it was because God the Father (Who sent John to baptize) told him, '**He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.**' And that phrase, "**this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit**" means that from this One- the Holy Spirit is given or "proceeds". And that is *exactly* what the writers of the Nicene Creed meant when they said,

The Holy Spirit proceeds FROM both the Father and the Son.

Now in verses 16&17- Jesus taught a Parable concerning "new wine" and "old wineskins"; as well as a patch of "unshrunk cloth" and "old garments". And Jesus made His Point twice when He said:

1. **No one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment**
2. **Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins**

Now why is that? Why can't you put a patch of "unshrunk cloth" on an old garment? And why can't you put new wine into old wineskins? And why did Jesus use those two Commodities as Examples?

First of all, back in the first Century- when the Jew made alcoholic wine- they went through a process called, "*Fermentation*". So, when they got the "new juice" out of the grapes- the grapes were crushed; and the juice was yielded out into the vats. And they would literally pour that juice into the skin of an animal- typically a goat's skin. And they would sew the goat skin up with the feet together- so you had this big sack or a big pouch. And they cut the head off and the neck would be the spout. And they would wrap the neck up and tie it with leather thongs. And they would fill this carcass with the grape juice.

And while it was in that skin- the juice would ferment. And when grape juice ferments- gas is released and it expands. So, it was critical to use freshly killed animal skins because they were subtle and soft; and they would *expand* during the Process of fermentation without tearing.

Also, as the juice fermented- there was a Separation. The Impurities in the wine- which was called, the "dregs" would sink to the bottom of that animal skin; while the juice that was being fermented would rise to the top- close to the spout.

And after a certain period of Time- the juice that was being fermented would be poured out into *another* skin- leaving the dregs at the bottom. And that Process would *continue* as more and more juice became wine and would rise near the spout- while more and more of the dregs would sink toward the bottom.

And that wine would go from skin to skin to skin until it was "pure"- meaning there were no more dregs; and no sour vinegar left at the Bottom.

So, what Jesus was saying here was, if you take the "new wine" of the Gospel and you try to put it into the old cracked, brittle, stiff wineskin of the Old Covenant- the expansion Process of the Gospel taking hold on the souls of individuals will burst the brittle, old wineskin.

In other words, the people who try to hold on to the Old Covenant will be offended and hurt; while the "new wine" of the Gospel in the New Covenant- will be spilled out onto the ground and wasted. In other words- Jesus was saying to those Pharisees you simply CANNOT put the infinitely superior Gospel of Salvation by Grace through Faith into the old "Wineskin" of the religion of the Old Covenant.

But by extension- we can take that Truth and bring it forward into our Day as well. And we can now say, "*You CANNOT put the true Gospel into any other false religious System; or human Philosophy!*"

So, for example, you CANNOT combine the biblical Gospel with the Roman religious System. In fact, you can't combine the true Gospel with *any* Works/Righteousness religious System on earth today. But you also *cannot* combine the Gospel with social Liberalism. You *cannot* combine it with neo-Orthodoxy. You *cannot* combine it with the Cults. You *cannot* combine the true Gospel with anything else.

And by using the second Example of trying to put a patch of "unshrunk cloth" on an old Garment- Jesus was simply making the SAME Point by using a different Example. The patch of unshrunk cloth would be easy to stretch to cover the hole- while the old garment would simply tear.

So, bottom line- Jesus was teaching that the true, biblical Gospel is utterly unique. There is nothing else like it. It stands alone and is an Exclusive. And therefore, any Attempt; by anybody; for any reason; to add anything to the Gospel- *changes* the Gospel on a fundamental level. And the End Result is that it *destroys* both the Gospel and the people who are hearing it.

You see, when anyone adds anything to the biblical Gospel- they change the Gospel into something else that God did NOT give and that God did NOT say. And when you do that- when you add anything to the Gospel- you are, in effect- creating a brand- new Religion that CANNOT forgive a single Sin or save a single Soul. Because when that happens- it *fundamentally* destroys both the Gospel and those who trust in that false Teaching.

The Gospel has already been given; and defined; and written down; in the Holy Bible. And it isn't broken and, therefore, it doesn't need to be "fixed". All that the Gospel needs- is to be heralded unashamedly to every creature; believed on; and obeyed.

And so, there is one, single Gospel. And that one single Gospel is Good for every human on earth. We don't need different "gospels" to serve different groups of people. The one, single, biblical Gospel is able to save the soul of a poor black man, who has been oppressed as well as save the soul of a rich white man who has had many advantages in this Life. The one, single, biblical Gospel can take *any* Sinner; from *any* nation; who lives under *any* Culture; and who has committed *any* Sin and wash his black Heart with red Blood and make him whiter than snow.

So, we don't need one "gospel" for men and another one for women. We don't need one "gospel" for the young and another one for the old. We don't need one "gospel" for the rich and another one for the poor. The one, single, biblical Gospel works for *anybody* and *everybody*!

So, the Goal of the Christian Church is NOT to add to; or take away anything from what the Apostles articulated in that Body of Teaching called, "*The Apostles' Teaching*" (**The Acts 2:42**)- which is the collection of ALL the revealed Divine Truth found in the 27 Books of the New Testament. And that means that the Goal of the Christian Church is to study and research and pray and struggle and labor to:

Jude 3b

... contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Because nobody is forgiven or saved through good Intentions or Sincerity. Every soul on earth MUST be born again. And so, true Salvation can only be obtained in the one single way that God has determined:

Salvation comes by *hearing; believing; and obeying* the Gospel

... so, changing the Gospel- even for sincere Reasons- will NOT accomplish *anything* except to doom people to spend all of Eternity in Hell!

So, Jesus was telling those religious Hypocrites that the Gospel is the "new wine" and the patch of "unshrunk cloth". And as the Old Covenant is coming to a decisive End- the "new wine" and the "unshrunk cloth" of the New Covenant CANNOT be mixed with the Logic; or the Tenets; or the Ordinances; or the Requirements of the Old Covenant.

And to an untrained eye- it appears that the New Covenant is at war with the Old. It isn't. The ONLY Reason we can even have a New Covenant is NOT because we have somehow obeyed the Law of Moses perfectly. We haven't. In fact, NOBODY did- except Jesus. And that Fact changes EVERYTHING!

And so, we always have to be crystal clear about this. ANY Effort; by ANYONE- to use the Logic; or the Tenets; or the Ordinances; or the Requirements of the Old Covenant- today- AFTER Jesus has lived and died and risen again- is SINNING! They are NOT pleasing God- they are *insulting* Jesus and His finished Work!

So, in context- Jesus is teaching here that the "Old" MUST be utterly *replaced* with the "New". The Law of Moses and the Effort to obey it- did NOT and CANNOT forgive a single Sin or save a single soul. And so, all of the elaborate Rituals; and endless Ceremonies; and burdensome Requirements has been FOREVER replaced by the Simplicity of the Gospel- the glorious New Covenant!

But since the Pharisees and those who lived under the Old Covenant fasted- does that mean that Fasting itself has been replaced along with the other trappings of the inferior Revelation of the Old Covenant? No! Why? Because Jesus said something very crucial at the End of **Matthew 9:15b**:

... But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

So, the "patch of unshrunk cloth" and the "new wine" both represent the same thing: The new Reality that Jesus has brought with Him! The Kingdom of God is now here! The Bridegroom has come! The long- awaited Messiah is now in our midst! And that Reality is NOT temporary. Jesus is not here now and later on- He will be gone- like all the Old Testament Prophets and godly Kings were. No, one of the profound Distinctions of the New Covenant is that God will now remain *with* us and *in* us- FOREVER!

So, the Kingdom didn't come in Jesus- and then vanish out of the world when He ascended up into Heaven. NO! Jesus died for our Sins- ONCE FOR ALL! And He rose from the Dead- ONCE FOR ALL! And the Holy Spirit was sent into the world as the Real Presence of Jesus among us- ONCE FOR ALL!

So, the Kingdom of God is the present reigning Power of Jesus Christ in the world- right now- to effectively *subdue* wicked hearts to the King; and *create* a people who believe Him; and who love Him; and who delight in God alone being glorified! You see, in our fallen State- we labored to Sin and to promote what was BEST for ourselves. But now that we have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth- we do all that we do- so that God alone is glorified! And because we are now saved- we experience the fullness of our own Joy- when God alone is glorified!

So, the Holy Spirit of the Bridegroom is now gathering; and drawing; and purifying a Bride for the Lord Christ. And that is the Church- NOT Israel! And

this is the Gospel of Jesus Christ as well as the "*Mystery of Godliness*" that the Bible refers to.

So, we are NOT made Righteous because we obey the eternal Commandments of God. We strive to obey the eternal Commandments of God because we have *already* been forgiven and made Righteous- by Faith alone! And this Reality is the "new wine" and the "unshrunk cloth".

Jesus taught that the "old wineskins" CANNOT contain this "new wine". And so, something has to change. Because the Old Covenant MUST "give way" to the New. And part of the Way that will happen- is through Fasting. Because there is no break in Jesus' Thought in this Passage. And it is the same in all three Accounts in all three "synoptic Gospels". The old garment and the old brittle wineskins relate directly the inferior Jewish understanding of and worship of the one true living God in the Old Covenant. And that *includes* the Way and the Reason they fasted.

Fasting was inherited from the Old Testament and had been used as a part of Jewish Worship and Life in relating to God. In **Luke 18:11&12**- we get yet another glimpse of how common it was for the "religious" people of the Old Covenant to fast when we read:

11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

12 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

... but we MUST remember that this man was Lost!

And so, the Ritual of his Fasting twice each week did NOTHING but move him further and further AWAY from God! And so, the Way he fasted and the Reason behind WHY he fasted is part of the "old wineskin" that Jesus was talking about.

And Jesus was crystal clear about this: The old wineskins CANNOT contain the "new wine" of the Kingdom of God that Jesus is bringing in. At all. In any Respect. You simply CANNOT mix the "old wineskins" of the *inferior* Old Covenant with the "new wine" of the *superior* New Covenant!

And that means that Believers back in the 1st Century (who were primarily Jewish) were taught to "Leave" or "Abandon" the shadowy and symbolic Revelation of God in the Old Covenant that the writer of Hebrews infallibly called, the "**elementary teaching about the Christ**". And those Jewish Believers were told to "press on" and "fully embrace" the "mature" and superior Revelation of God in the New Covenant!

Hebrews 6:1-3

1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

2 of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

3 And this we will do, if God permits.

“But Brother Blair, doesn't that Logic then completely eliminate Believers operating under the New Covenant from fasting at all?” Well, it would if that was all that Jesus said about it. But it isn't. In **Matthew 9:15b**, Jesus said this:

... But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Here Jesus says that His Disciples will one day fast again- after the Bridegroom is "taken away from them". And we have already discovered in previous Sermons that this "taking away" was NOT merely the three Days that Jesus laid in the Grave- as some teach. It refers to the "Days" *after* His Ascension and *before* His Second Coming- which is called, the “*Last Days*” or the “*Church Age*”.

So, from that we see that Jesus Himself taught that those who love and follow Him in the Revelation of the New Covenant during the "Church Age" are supposed to fast. And that is why Jesus said, “*WHEN you fast...*” and NOT “*IF you fast...*” (**Matthew 6:17**).

Yet, in the very next two verses- Jesus seems to *undo* what He just said- because He taught that Believers CANNOT add the “new wine” of the New Covenant into the “old wineskins” of the Old Covenant- which *included* Fasting.

So, which one is it? Are Believers, who operate in the superior New Covenant, supposed to fast? And if so- how did Fasting under the New Covenant *replace* Fasting under the Old- since Fasting was carried out by Believers under the Old Covenant?

The Answer is that Fasting remains as a viable “*Tool of Believers*” and as “*Means of Grace*” because the very Context and Purpose of Fasting under the New Covenant was changed! In other words- the Disciples of Jesus will fast after He has been "taken away". But the kind of Fasting they have known under the Revelation of the Old Covenant is no longer suitable for the New Reality of the

Presence and Power of the in-breaking Kingdom of God! In other words, the ONLY reason that Fasting can be carried out today by Believers under the New Covenant- is because the Purpose and Logic and Reason for Fasting under the New Covenant is radically *different* than the Logic and Reason and Purpose for Fasting that Believers carried out under the Old.

And so, this is similar to the Sacrament of Communion. Under the Old Covenant- Believers ate and drank- after the Reality of the Death Angel- “passing over” them (**Exodus 12**). And so, everyone who participated in that Old Covenant Service- while the Old Covenant was in force- did so, in Light of the Reality of the Death Angle “passing over” them.

But now, under the New Covenant- we do NOT partake of the Communion Service in Light of that Old Covenant Example. And that is why Jesus said,

1Corinthians 11:24b

... This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.

... and ...

1Corinthians 11:25b

... This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.

Believers today do NOT partake of the Communion Service today “in remembrance” of the Death Angel *passing over* the Children of Israel- as they were *commanded* to do under the Old Covenant. Today, Believers partake of the Lord’s Table “in remembrance” of Jesus and His finished Work!

And this is so true that today, anyone partaking of the Lord’s Table “in remembrance” of that Death Angel passing over the Children of Israel (as commanded by Moses) are SINNING! Why? Because Jesus told us NOT to partake of the Communion in any other Way other than “in remembrance” of Him!

“But, Brother Blair- the Death Angel passing over the Children of Israel was symbolic of Believers today being delivered from eternal Death by Jesus- the sacrificial lamb.” I realize that. But that is precisely the Point I am making. We do NOT and we should NOT hold on to the Signs; and Symbols; and Types; of the Old Testament when we have the Reality of the New that we can embrace- lest we *belittle* that Reality by *ignoring* it!

So, for Believers to partake of the Lord’s Table today “in remembrance” of the Old Covenant symbolism of the Death Angel passing over them- AFTER WHO Jesus is; and AFTER all that Jesus has done; and AFTER Him *specifically*

telling us HOW to partake- would be for us to *insult* Jesus; and what Jesus has done!

The SAME Logic is used as to why Christians gather to worship God on the Lord's Day and NOT on the Sabbath. Under the Old Covenant- God commanded the Children of Israel to rest and worship Him on the Sabbath (Sundown Friday to sundown Saturday).

But God raised Jesus from the Dead on the 1st Day of the week and NOT on the Sabbath. And so, Christians gather together on the "Lord's Day" (Sunday) to *celebrate* the Resurrection of Jesus and to be put into remembrance that because of WHO Jesus is; and because of WHAT Jesus alone has done- we now can "cease from our Labors" (to obtain God's Favor) and we can find the eternal REST (Sabbath) for our souls- in Jesus alone- and NOT in a particular Day of the Week!

So, New Covenant Believers should fast- yes! But we should NOT fast after the similitude of the Old Covenant Believers. Why? Because Jesus has lived and died and risen again; and has brought to us an infinitely *superior* Way and Reason and Purpose to fast in the New Covenant! So, Fasting remains- ONLY because Fasting has radically changed!

The "new wine" of Christ's Presence demands NOT- "*no*" Fasting- but "*new*" Fasting. And the "*new*" Fasting is based on the Mystery that the Bridegroom has already come the 1st Time; and that He will come again the 2nd Time. But it is NOT that Messiah will come in the Future the 1st Time! We don't believe that- because we believe in the inspiration of the New Testament that tells us that Jesus is the Messiah and that He has already come the 1st Time! But that means that the "new wine" of the very Presence of Jesus Christ calls for "new" Fasting.

In other words- the Yearning and Longing and Ache that was the Foundation for the "old" Fasting was NOT based on the glorious Truth that the Messiah has already come! Their Mourning over Sin; and their Longing for Deliverance from Danger; and their Yearning for God that inspired the "old" Fasting was NOT based- in any way- on the finished Work of Christ; nor on the great Revelation of His Truth and Grace in History. In other words, the Old Covenant Believer fasted for completely DIFFERENT Reasons than we fast today!

All those things were still way off in the Future to all those who fasted under the Old Covenant. But now- the Bridegroom has come! And in His Coming- He struck the decisive Blow against Sin, Death, Hell, and Satan! And so, we CANNOT and we MUST NOT then fast as though that hasn't happened!

What distinguishes Christianity from Judaism (the New versus the Old Covenants) is that the longed- for Kingdom of God is now present with us (in one sense); as well as being a future Promise. The King has already come! And He will come again! But to the Jew- the Coming of the Messiah was ONLY a future

Promise- that they refuse to believe has happened. So, the Jew fasted- with the Belief and Knowledge that the King would only come at some point in the Future. And so, we CANNOT and we MUST NOT fast with that same Belief and Knowledge!

Now it is true that the Kingdom of God is not come in its FULLNESS yet. It is NOT fully consummated. The Kingdom is yet to come in all its glorious Fullness and Power. And that is why, at the Last Supper- Jesus said,

Luke 22:18

for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.

... and yet as He was with His disciples, Jesus said,

Luke 17:20b&21

**20 ...The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed;
21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."**

So, the "Mystery of the Kingdom of God" is that, in one sense- the Kingdom of God is a present Reality; while- in *another* sense- it is a future Promise.

But what is decisively Christian in this- that NO Old Testament Jew understood or possessed- is that the Hope of New Covenant Believers (Christians) is rooted in the past historical Triumph of that very same God over Sin and Death and Hell and Satan through the Life and Death and Resurrection of the Lamb- Who offered Himself once for all- as a Sacrifice for Sin and then sat down (He was finished!) at the Right Hand of God! And this is the "new wine" that Jesus spoke of! And it is also the "patch of unshrunk cloth". And so, when we fast now- it MUST be with all of that in mind!

Amen. Let's pray.

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