

# It has never been about the rules!

Matthew 9:14 Then came to him the **disciples of John**, saying, Why do **we** and the **Pharisees** fast oft, but **thy disciples fast not?** 15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and **then shall they fast.** 16 No man putteth a piece of **new cloth** unto an **old garment**, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. 17 Neither do men put **new wine into old bottles:** else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and **both are preserved.**

1. The contrast! Matthew 9:14 Then came to him the **disciples of John**, saying, Why do **we** and the **Pharisees** fast oft, but **thy disciples fast**

**not?** 15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and **then shall they fast.**

a. The religious crowd is criticizing Jesus.

i. He associates with sinners [Matthew 9:11](#) And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

ii. Jesus nor His disciples were playing all the religious games they were playing

1. Making sure people saw them giving [Matthew 6:2](#)

Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, **do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do** in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

2. Praying so men can see you [Matthew 6:5](#) And

when thou prayest, thou shalt **not be as the**

**hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing** in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

3. Fasting or appearing to fast to impress people  
**Matthew 6:16** Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

- iii. Jesus doesn't seem to protect His holiness well enough, He doesn't know who He is associating with

- b. His disciples do not fast and now John the Baptist's disciples want to know why **Matthew 9:14** Then came to him the **disciples of John**, saying, Why do **we** and the **Pharisees** fast oft, but **thy disciples fast not?**

- i. John's disciples were genuine.
    - ii. They were not these hypocrites

iii. But they did worry a great deal about outward change. They were focused on seeing what they considered to be fruits of repentance [Matthew 3:8](#)

**Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:**

1. Obviously there was nothing wrong with John's message
2. But it might be easy to get too caught up in appearances even for those that love Jesus and are seeking Him
3. It might be that God's people could focus on what they considered the change, the fruit, and miss the real fruit

c. There was a problem even in the question that John's disciples asked

- i. Fasting was a common, prominent outward form of spirituality among the Jews
- ii. So the question is an indirect criticism of Jesus and His disciples
- iii. It was as though Jesus wasn't teaching His disciples correctly
- iv. Apparently even the disciples of John have been affected by the Pharisees [14](#) **Then came to him the**

**disciples of John**, saying, Why do **we** and the **Pharisees** fast oft, but **thy disciples fast not?**

- v. John's disciples are showing a problem of pride.
  - 1. They consider that they are doing better than Jesus and His disciples
  - 2. They had gotten hung up on outward forms of spirituality
- d. Jesus' answer was that His disciples had Him and didn't need to fast yet **15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and **then shall they fast.****
  - i. Fasting is associated with sadness usually and great need
  - ii. How could they be sad if He was there
  - iii. How could they need something if they were in His presence
  - iv. The day was coming that He would leave but not yet

v. John the Baptist was great but Jesus was God and therefore the greatest

e. John had known that he needed to decrease but maybe his disciples were having a hard time with that  
**John 3:28** Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. **30** He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

f. Maybe the real question behind all of this was Why do you emphasize internals like forgiveness while the religious people ask for fasting which is an external?

2. Jesus makes a comparison that they can understand

**Matthew 9:16** No man putteth a piece of **new cloth** unto an **old garment**, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. **17** Neither do men put **new wine into old bottles**: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and **both are preserved.**

a. Jesus gives an illustration so that they can understand

- b. If you had clothes that would shrink when you washed them then you would have to be careful what you used to patch a hole or you would only make the tear worse
  - c. Since they used animal skins to hold their wine they knew that the skin and the wine had aged together and that new wine would burst an old wine skin
  - d. There is no way you can put new stuff in something old without causing a problem
  - e. If you were smart then you would be wise enough to prepare something new for the new
3. This story should help them understand what He was doing
- a. Somewhere along the way the Jews had lost sight of God's will for them
  - b. They had misunderstood the law and its purpose.
    - i. It had always been to show man his need of a Savior.
    - ii. It had never been a morality check list
    - iii. It was never meant to be a way to compare yourself to others
    - iv. Never should they have used it to show off like what was happening

- v. God had always been concerned about the internal and not the external
- c. Jesus' message is actually not a new message
  - i. Man has always been a sinner in need of a Savior
  - ii. The law was always to show you that you had failed God and needed grace
  - iii. Man has never been saved by keeping the law and never will be
  - iv. In the Old Testament every time man messes up God arranges a sacrifice
  - v. The whole Tabernacle was designed to show forth Jesus and how sins would be atoned for
- d. There is a need for something new but it is not to say that the Old Testament was wrong
  - i. The real question wasn't if the Old Testament was wrong but rather the way they were understanding it and practicing it
  - ii. They had gotten religious but not real
  - iii. They were following what their leaders said instead of finding out what God said in His Word
  - iv. All of their religious, hypocritical ways were wrong not the Old Testament



- v. Jesus is screaming by His methods, you are off track, you have messed up, it is not about keeping rules, it is not about looking good, it is not about being religious
- e. The old had been the nation of Israel. The new will be the church.
  - i. Both are God's people.
  - ii. The problem was that they had gotten off track
  - iii. So out of the great nation of Israel He calls out a remnant to start His church
    - 1. Please do not forget that all those that started the church were Jews
    - 2. They wrote the New Testament
    - 3. They taught us and gave us all we know
    - 4. This is not a condemnation of the Jews but rather of their being fake religious people
- f. Some common mistakes
  - i. To think that the Old Testament is not important is totally wrong. It is the Word of God
  - ii. To think that God was one way in the Old Testament and another in the New Testament is wrong

- iii. He was a loving, kind, merciful, full of grace God in the Old Testament just like He is in the New Testament
- iv. People were never saved by keeping the law, doing good, keeping rules
- v. In the Old Testament sins were forgiven by the blood sacrifice just like in the New Testament
- g. Jesus never came to destroy the law [Matthew 5:17](#)

**Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.** <sup>18</sup> For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. <sup>19</sup> Whosoever therefore shall **break one of these least commandments,** and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> For I say unto you, That **except your righteousness shall exceed *the***

***righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.***

4. The cry for today

- a. We can make the same mistake that the religious crowd did in Jesus day
  - i. We can be so worried about our externals that we fail to realize what is really important
  - ii. We can become critical and judgmental just like those Pharisees
- b. In many ways we are falling into the same trap that ruined the work of the nation of Israel
  - i. It is never about what the outside looks like but rather what is happening on the inside
  - ii. Understand grace and not works
  - iii. Understand love and not law
- c. Understand that rituals and rules never take the place of a work of grace in our heart

- d. There was no way that God's Word and the New Testament work could have been done through the current Jewish religious environment
- e. They had become believers in themselves and their own goodness
- f. Turn from your own goodness. Turn from your pride. Humble yourself and come to Him for what He has done instead of what you can do!