

Luke 5:33-39 New Wine

Jesus' transformation of fasting illustrates the New Covenant's fulfillment of the Old Covenant's hope.

How does Jesus transform the practice of fasting?

- 1) The presence of Jesus is a cause for joyful feasting (5:33-34).
 - a) The Messianic Kingdom has come, fulfilling the promises of the Old Covenant.
 - i) Old Covenant shadows and types pointed forward, fostering an appropriate longing for future blessing/fulfillment.
 - ii) Isaiah 58:6-12—The Future Fast that Is a Feast
 - b) The Desire of pure human longing is here.
 - i) The Wedding Imagery is in the Prophetic Tradition of Promise and Fulfillment
 - ii) The arrival of Jesus, the Bridegroom, marks the anticipated time of joy. Rabbinic tradition said that certain religious duties, such as routine fasts were to be suspended for wedding festivities.
 - c) Subtle contrast between "Can you make" (v. 34) and "then they will" (v. 35)? There are no mandatory fasts in the New Covenant (despite certain churches' traditions such as Lent).
- 2) The passion of Jesus is a cause for sober fasting (5:35).
 - a) "The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away" (v. 35)—the word used for "taken away" suggests a violent removal, so most see this as the crucifixion, not the ascension of Christ.
 - b) "Then they will fast in those days"—this suggests a mournful and sober fasting, much like what we find during Israel's exile in Babylon (see Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther). Christ's death and burial was the ultimate recapitulation of exile (think of Adam, exiled from Eden; Israel, exiled from Samaria; Judah, exiled from Jerusalem; the scapegoat, exiled from the camp of Israel).
 - c) Prior to the Resurrection of Christ the disciples fasted, bewildered by their loss and confused about the redemptive purpose of God. After the Resurrection of Christ the disciples fast with confident faith in our redemption in Christ. The Resurrection of Christ was the ultimate recapitulation of the return from exile.
- 3) The promise of Jesus is a cause for joyful fasting (5:36-39).
 - a) Ironically, Jesus calls us to remember His passion not with a fast, but with a feast that we call Communion, Eucharist (Thanksgiving), The Lord's Supper, and the breaking of bread. It is a time and place of deepest humility and joyous ascending.
 - b) The New Covenant does not destroy the Old Covenant (v. 37). The New Covenant fulfills the Old Covenant.
 - i) Old Covenant forms of worship and piety are not destroyed, but transformed by their fulfillment in the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.
 - ii) Many Jewish Christians found it difficult to undergo this transformation (Judaizers, Ebionites). The Epistle to the Hebrews helps to address this problem.
 - iii) Jesus' analogies of old and new garments and wineskins illustrates the distinctions between Old and New Covenant worship forms and piety. DISCONTINUITY.
 - iv) Paul's analogy of the olive tree with roots and branches illustrates the organic relationship of Old and New Covenant. CONTINUITY.
 - v) Once the oak has grown you can't squeeze it back under the acorn's cap.
 - c) The New Wine is a symbol of joy (Isaiah 65:8-16).
- 4) Some principles for joyful fasting between the Advents.
 - a) There are no mandatory fasts in the New Covenant.
 - b) The Bible affirms the goodness of creation (food) and God's kindness in giving us good things to enjoy.
 - c) Fast as a means of hungering for God. There is a great danger in our consumerist society that we are constantly feeding ourselves with more that the world offers, and in this way curbing the soul's hunger for God (Philippians 3:8). "In fasting, as well as in all other privations, every loss is for the sake of 'gaining Christ.'" John Piper
 - d) Fast as a means of promoting self-control. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, an aspect of love. Fasting helps us learn to say "no" to self, so that we can say "yes" to Christ in service to others (1 Cor. 9:26-27).
 - e) Fast in the light of the hope of the consummation of joy in the coming of Christ.
 - f) Beware of pride and hypocrisy (Matthew 6:16-18).

