

Should Disciples Fast?

And they said to him, “The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink.” And Jesus said to them, “Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.” He also told them a parable: “No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, ‘The old is good.’” (Luke 5:33–39)

A *fast* is a “covering” of the mouth (Heb: *tsowm*), as in putting one’s hand over one’s mouth so as to abstain from food. To understand fasting, then, is to understand the nature and importance of spiritual *coverings*. And it is the nature of *coverings* that causes Israelites to fast on *Yom Kipporim*, the *day of coverings*.

About ancient Israel’s fasting, the Lord [*YHWH*] through the prophet Isaiah said,

Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,
and oppress all your workers.

Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with a wicked fist.

Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose,
a day for a person to humble himself?

Is it to bow down his head like a reed,
and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?

Will you call this a fast,
and a day acceptable to the Lord?

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke,

to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;

when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

The covering with which Israel should have *covered* itself wasn't abstaining from food, but abstaining from evil, from greed, from oppression. Israel was to cover itself with righteousness.

The Lord isn't, according to what Isaiah records, interested in a person humbling him or herself, bowing his or her head like a reed bent low, spreading sackcloth and ashes under the person. Yet it is these very symbols of fasting that remain today, for *fasting* is synonymous with humbling oneself, with afflicting the person's fleshly body so that the inner person can focus on God. But afflicting the person's fleshly body by not eating or drinking doesn't draw the person any closer to God than the person was before. All that afflicting the flesh does is cause the person's digestive system to shutdown for a few hours ... it isn't what comes out of the person's bowels that defiles the person, but what comes out of the heart through the mouth.

When asked by Pharisees and their scribes why disciples of John the Baptist and disciples of the Pharisees fasted, but Jesus' disciples did not fast, Jesus answered by saying that wedding guests feast when the bridegroom is present. He then told a parable that is directly related to fasting, a parable based upon two analogies, the first the fabric of a garment and the second, wine in wineskins, both forms of *coverings*.

To understand the parable Jesus told, a person needs to appreciate the nature of the parable:

- A garment of new cloth versus a garment of old cloth shares the concept of a "garment" being central to the metaphor, with garments being coverings that conceal nakedness as a hand over a person's mouth prevents the person from eating.
- A new wineskin versus an old wineskin shares the concept that a wineskin is like a garment, with the wine within being like the person clothed by a garment. The wineskin *covers* the wine so that it will not spill.

Contrary to what is usually taught within Christendom, *grace* is not unmerited pardon, but a *covering* of a person so that no sin is reckoned to the person. The covering does not prevent sin, nor does it pay the death penalty for sin. Jesus at Calvary, as the reality of the goat sacrificed on the altar on *Yom Kipporim*, paid the death penalty for all of Israel's sins in this world. The resurrected Jesus, as the reality of the *Azazel* goat, bears the sins of Israel and thus *covers* Israel's lawlessness in the heavenly realm where anger equates to murder and lust with adultery, but Jesus does not die for these sins so these sins remain though covered by Jesus' righteousness.

Grace is Jesus covering the sins of disciples by bearing these sins as the Azazel goat had the sins of Israel read over its head before being led into the wilderness by the hand of a fit man. Thus, grace is put on like a garment; so when a person puts on Christ (Gal 3:27), the person covers him or herself with the garment of Christ Jesus' righteousness, or grace.

Fasting becomes a type and shadow of grace. The covering of fasting prevents the outside entry of food into the person, whereas the covering of grace prevents

outside observation of the inner person: food in fasting equates with sight under grace, an analogous relationship that will be initially hard to perceive, but a relationship central to Jesus being the bread [food] that has come down from heaven. To fast on *Yom Kipporim*, now, is not to eat of Christ as taking the Passover sacraments of bread and wine is the eating of Christ. Therefore, since *Yom Kipporim* is a shadow and type of the entire Passover season, to not eat and thus afflict oneself on the 10th day of the seventh month is the chiral image of eating bread of affliction during Unleavened Bread in a non-symmetrical mirror image relationship like the relationship the left hand has with the right hand.

Grace as a covering is not a concept that originates at Calvary ... before a person of the nations [a Gentile] is drawn from this world by the Father (John 6:44), no sin is reckoned against the person (Rom 5:13) because the person's sins are "covered" by the person being consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32) as a son of disobedience (Eph 2:2–3) and is hence, a bondservant to the prince of this world. This person will involuntarily obey sin which leads to death (Rom 6:16). And though this person will not have had his or her sins counted against the person, the person will also not have any life but that which comes by the physical oxidation of sugars. This person is in subjection to death and will die and will never live again if the Father does not raise the person from the dead while the person still lives or raise the person in the great White Throne Judgment.

When sin is not reckoned against a person, the person is under grace—in the case of the uncalled Gentile, *natural grace*, which ends when the person comes under the law. This doesn't mean that the uncalled Gentile is "saved," for death reigned over all of humankind from Adam to Moses, not from Adam to Christ Jesus. With the giving of the law, Israel became accountable for the nation's sins (transgressions of the law — 1 John 3:4). Therefore, because Israel was accountable for its sins, animal sacrifices "covered," but did not pay the death penalty for these sins. Jesus paid the death penalty at Calvary for every sin committed in this world, but He didn't/doesn't pay the death penalty for the sins of Israel in the inter-dimensional heavenly realm where anger equates to murder and lust to adultery (Matt 5:21–22, 27–28). Rather, He bears these sins, for Israel, now a nation circumcised of heart, is to serve Christ and to serve obedience as Gentile converts formerly served sin. Hence, grace doesn't cover the person who voluntarily returns to being the bondservant of sin (Rom 6:16).

Because a person doesn't have his or her sins reckoned against the person doesn't mean that these sins are forgiven; all grace means is that these sins are "covered."

The record of debt with its legal demands that had stood against every Gentile (Col 2:14) was set aside at Calvary by Jesus, as the reality of the goat sacrificed on the altar on *Yom Kipporim*, dying on the cross. He became the reality of every lamb, every goat sacrificed by Israel. Therefore, in this world every record of debt that had stood against an Israelite, circumcised in the flesh or in the heart, has been abolished. But with spiritual birth, Israel now has life in the inter-dimensional heavenly realm through receipt of the Holy Spirit or breath holy [πνεῦμα ἅγιον]. And it is in this inter-dimensional realm where Israel needs its sins covered so that they will not be counted against disciples; it is in this heavenly realm where disciples are now under grace.

When the Father draws a person from this world, the Father gives a second breath of life to the person thereby causing the person to be born again or born from above. This second breath of life [πνεῦμα θεοῦ] has come from heaven and gives the person indwelling spiritual life through having been born of spirit (John 3:5–8). This second life is not born consigned to disobedience, but is born free to keep the commandments. It is born under no condemnation (Rom 8:1–2). Therefore, this second life needs a covering for sin, with obedience to the laws of God being the only acceptable covering. However, a human parent doesn't expect a human infant or toddler to perfectly keep the expectations of the household into which the infant or toddler was born; nor does the heavenly Father expect His sons as spiritual infants and toddlers to perfectly keep the expectations of the house of God.

It is a disciple's desire to keep the expectations of the household of God—this desire expressed in *faith*—that pleases the Father, for the righteousness of human beings is to the Lord as bloody menstrual rags (Isa 64:6). No one is righteous. All have come short of the glory of the Lord. Therefore, no person can cover him or herself with the person's own obedience. Rather, the person who hears the words of Jesus and believes the Father passes from death to life (John 5:24) because the person has faith of the type expressed by the patriarch Abraham when he believed the Lord and had his belief counted to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6).

Every disciple as a newly born son of God needs a covering that does for them spiritually what a diaper does for a human infant. And as long as sin and death continues to dwell within the fleshly members of disciples, this covering will be Christ Jesus' righteousness expressed in the concept of *grace*.

Therefore, in Jesus' parable about fasting, the new garment and the old garment are, respectively, the righteousness of Christ Jesus versus the righteousness that comes via individual fasting, repentance, and commandment-keeping. Expressed in Christian linguistic iconography, the issue is grace versus the law.

The old wineskin represents the same thing as the old garment represents: fasting, repentance, and command-keeping. The old wine that is in this old wineskin is analogous to Israel. The new wine that is put into a new skin represents Jesus' disciples under grace. And Jesus adds that no one after drinking the old wine desires new wine, for the old is better (Luke 5:39).

Pause and consider what the Psalmist wrote:

For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup
with foaming wine [new wine], well mixed,
and he pours out from it,
and all the wicked of the earth
shall drain it down to the dregs. (75:8)

The king wrote in Proverbs,

Do not look at wine when it is red,
when it sparkles in the cup
and goes down smoothly.
In the end it bites like a serpent
and stings like an adder.
Your eyes will see strange things,

and your heart utter perverse things. (23:31–33)

If Gentile converts under grace are like new wine in new wineskins, drunk by the wicked of the earth, going down smoothly, but biting with a deadly bite, causing the wicked to see strange things and utter perverse things—can a better description be written about the Christianity of Babylon? Do not the teachers of visible Christendom teach infant sons of God to ignore the commandments because *Christians are under grace and not under the law*? Is not the old wine of fasting, repentance, and commandment-keeping better? It certainly is, isn't it?

How much time must pass before a new garment is an old garment, or how much time must pass before new wine becomes old wine? Will a new garment not become an old garment, or new wine, old wine? Will a disciple under grace not eventually keep the commandments? If a disciple won't, if a disciple remains as foaming wine, will Jesus drink this fruit of the vine in the kingdom (Matt 26:29)?

John's disciples were not under grace: the only covering they had for disobedience was their obedience ... obedience covers disobedience by the person cleansing him or herself from doing what is dishonorable and becoming a vessel set apart as holy (2 Tim 2:21); obedience negates disobedience. Therefore, John's disciples through repentance, fasting, and keeping the commandments strove to cleanse their hearts from all disobedience as they pursued a law that leads to righteousness when pursued by faith (Rom 9:31–32). For John's disciples, fasting was an expression of their faith that they would be accepted by God if they turned from the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and sought God with all of their might.

John's disciples were not oppressing the poor; they were sharing their bread with the hungry and bringing the homeless into their homes. They were, because of repentance, doing those things that the Lord, through Isaiah, had commanded. But this was not the case with the Pharisees.

The disciples of the Pharisees sought purity through works that had nothing to do with loosening the bonds of oppression ... beginning with the Great Assembly under Ezra, the elders of Israel consciously placed a hedge of do's and don'ts around the law so that never again would Israel transgress the commandments and cause God to deliver the nation into slavery in a far land. But in placing this hedge around the law, the elders of Israel set the nation up to fail. Jesus said to the elders of Israel, "Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law" (John 7:19); for keeping the commandments should only be the outward manifestation of inward love for God and neighbor.

When keeping the commandments becomes proof of one's righteousness, the commandments cease being revelations of inner love and become many hangmen nooses that kill the would-be righteous. Keeping the commandments as "proof" of one's righteousness proves that the person has no understanding of righteousness. Likewise, fasting as *proof* of one's righteousness proves that the person's righteousness does not exceed that of the Pharisees, thereby assuring the person that he or she will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:20).

The above is correct: if a person fasts [i.e., goes without food or drink from sundown to sundown] as a demonstration to God of the person's righteousness, usually expressed in pious phrasing about seeking God's will concerning this matter or that matter, the person's righteousness does not exceed that of the Pharisees. The person is, most likely, a disciple of the Pharisees.

Why so? Because the Bridegroom has not yet been taken away—

The Apostle Paul calls Jesus “a life-giving spirit [πνεῦμα]” (1 Cor 15:45). Elsewhere, Paul says of disciples, “You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God [πνεῦμα θεοῦ] dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ [πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ] does not belong to him” (Rom 8:9).

According to the Apostle Paul, if there is not an indwelling of Jesus within the person, with Jesus now being a life-giving spirit, then the person does not belong to Christ Jesus, but rather, is of this world. Physical life is in the blood (Gen 9:4) because a person’s “breath” or πνεῦμα is carried by his or her blood to every cell in the person’s body—physical life is sustained by the oxidation of sugars at the cellular level, with the breath of a person being the means by which the oxygen needed for cellular oxidation gets into the person; blood carries breath throughout the person. And human breath, received from the first Adam, is the shadow and copy of a person receiving a second breath, the divine breath of God [πνεῦμα θεοῦ], theologically expressed as *being born of spirit*.

For far too long, Sabbatarian disciples within the splintered churches of God have used the “pin test” to prove that the flesh is still flesh, the tent in which the born-of-spirit son of God dwells. Because the fleshy tent of a disciple bleeds as readily after the person has been born of spirit as before, the one using the test denies that the other has been born of spirit. But all that the *pin test* reveals is how little understanding the person has. The disciple who has been crucified with Christ (Rom 6:6) has not had his or her fleshy tent crucified; yet the disciple with the *pin test* doesn’t consider that it is the old nature that formerly ruled the flesh that is crucified, not the flesh that bleeds. Likewise, the new creature that is a disciple is not the tent of flesh; so a test to see if the flesh bleeds will always show blood until the flesh is dead regardless of how large the new creature, born of spirit, has grown in grace [size of its covering] and in knowledge.

When a disciple does not drink of the cup on the night that Jesus was betrayed—the cup representing Jesus’ blood—the disciple does not take in the breath or spirit of Christ [πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ] and dies from loss of godly breath [πνεῦμα]. The person no longer belongs to Christ Jesus.

If a disciple takes the Passover sacraments of bread and wine on the night that Jesus was betrayed (the dark portion of the 14th of Abib), thereby drinking from the cup on the only night of the year when wine is not Cain’s offering, the disciple takes in the breath of Christ [πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ] through the cup, and has the indwelling of Christ Jesus throughout the year. Jesus has not left this disciple, whereas the disciple who does not take the sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed has no indwelling of Christ Jesus.

The disciple who takes the sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed has no need to fast (except on *Yom Kipporim*) for the Bridegroom dwells within the person through the person having the indwelling of Christ. But—and this is a large caveat—the disciple who does not take the sacraments on the dark portion of the 14th of Abib has lost the breath of Christ [πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ], and is as John’s disciples were if the disciple is faithful in fasting, repentance, and commandment-keeping. This disciple will be as Pharisees were if this disciple is a

hypocrite, knowing to take the sacraments but not doing so, or knowing to keep the commandments but not doing so. This disciple will be as a Gentile was if this disciple remains ignorant and without knowledge, not knowing to keep the commandments, especially the Sabbath commandment.

Everything changes, though, following the second Passover liberation of Israel—

Disciples as the Body of Christ are also the Body of the Son of Man; therefore, when the Son of Man is revealed [unrobed] (Luke 17:30), both the presently uncovered Head and the presently covered Body will be made naked. Disciples will lose the garment of grace. Their only covering of their nakedness will be their obedience to God [i.e., their commandment-keeping] and their fasting. Disciples will be separated from Christ Jesus, for no man marries his body. Without separation the Body of Christ that is already one with Christ will never become the Bride of Christ that will become one with Christ at the Wedding Supper.

So that there are no misunderstandings: disciples who take the Passover sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed are today with the Bridegroom, now a life-giving spirit, through having the indwelling of the spirit of Christ, received via the cup. But when Israel is liberated from the law of sin and flesh (Rom 7:21–25) that remains in the flesh of disciples (the reason the flesh dies), Israel will be delivered into the hand of the man of perdition (Dan 7:25) for the destruction of the flesh so that the spirit might be saved (1 Cor 5:5) when judgments are revealed (1 Cor 4:5). During these last seven endtime years, disciples will cover themselves with their obedience and with their fasting, the reason that Jesus said His disciples would fast. That time is not yet. Therefore, Jesus' disciples do not today fast like the disciples of John and the Pharisees did. There is no reason to fast, and every reason not-to, for fasting in the presence of the Bridegroom is an affront to the Bridegroom. Only the person who does not have the spirit of Christ will fast between today and the second Passover, said with the noted exception of on *Yom Kipporim*.

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