

SBC – July 18, 2021

Matt. 9:9-15 (NKJV)

“Questions About Tax Collectors & Fasting”

27

Prayer:

Slide # 1

Theme: *Christ the King*

Outline:

Chps. 1-2 The Advent of the King. (Proving His LEGAL right to the throne by His genealogy.)

Chp. 3 The Forerunner of the King and the King’s baptism.

Chp. 4 The Test of the King. (Proving His MORAL right to the throne by not yielding to temptation; and exhibiting His kingdom resume.)

Chps. 5-7 The Pronouncements of the King. (Proving His JUDICIAL right to the throne as seen in the wisdom of His kingdom teaching.)

Chps. 8-10 The Power of the King. (Proving His PROPHETICAL right to the throne by fulfilling prophecy.)

Chps. 11-12 The Rejection of the King.

Chp. 13 The Parables of the King.

Chps. 14-16 The Revelations of the King.

Chps. 17-20 The Instructions of the King.

Chps. 21-23 Formal Rejection of the King.

Chps. 24-25 The Predictions of the King.

Chps. 26-27 The Passion of the King.

Chp. 28 The Resurrection of the King.

A dominant theme in Matthew 8 and 9 is the Lordship authority of Christ. Last time in 9:1-8 we saw Christ has the authority to forgive sins which ultimately is the prerogative of God alone. Jesus claimed to forgive a paralytic and then proved it by immediately healing him. The people were in awe of this miracle and verse 8 says they “**glorified God who had given such power to men.**”

But in so doing they missed the point. This miracle demonstrated that Jesus was in fact the Messianic God-Man Who had the authority to forgive sins. He was no mere man that God had given this power to, but rather God Himself come in the flesh doing what only God can do.

We pick up the text today at Matthew 9:9.

Matthew 9:9 (NKJV)

9 As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he arose and followed Him.

Having demonstrated His authority to forgive sins Jesus then proceeded to call to Himself a tax collector named Matthew who would have been considered by the Jews in the worst category of sinners.

Matthew thus becomes an example of Christ’s forgiving and life changing power.

The other synoptic (similar) gospels of Mark and Luke refer to Matthew as Levi (cf. Mk. 2:14; Lk. 5:27). Many commentators think that Matthew may have been a sort of “nickname” given to him by Jesus (cf. Mt. 16:17-18; Mk. 2:14; 3:18; Lk. 5:27; 6:15). It means “**Gift of God**”. If so Matthew in effect was his “**Christian name**” and the name which Matthew himself (as the human author of the book) ascribed to himself as seen here.

Matthew shows Christian humility here in that he acknowledges his past and makes only a passing reference to his calling. Still, thematically it makes a major point. Matthew inserts this right after Jesus demonstrates His authority to forgive sins and right before Christ dines with tax collectors and sinners of which Matthew had been one.

Matthew himself is an example of a forgiven sinner whose life is changed by Christ to where he is used greatly by God. He is an example of a changed life brought about by true repentance.

We don’t know if there was any previous interaction with Jesus on the part of Matthew prior to his conversion. We do know that Matthew was busy at work collecting taxes and suddenly in that context Jesus said to him, “**Follow Me.**” And immediately Matthew arose and followed Him showing that indeed he recognized Christ’s Lordship authority in his life.

Following Christ denotes a complete break with his former life. He went from being a tax collector to a follower of Christ just like that and never turned back. He heard the voice of Christ, arose, and followed Him.

Slide # 2**John 10:27 (NKJV)**

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

This following Christ was no small thing. It wasn't like he locked up shop for an hour or two and then went back to collecting taxes. This was it. He was done as a tax collector.

And that was saying something because tax collectors were generally very wealthy. They were hated by the Jews because they were considered to be traitors who now worked for Rome. And they tended to be corrupt - over charging on taxes and keeping the excess. Because of their characteristic corruption and extortion the Jews considered fellow Jewish tax collectors the scum of the earth.

Don't you love this about Jesus? He often chooses those that religious pride would never touch.

Slide # 3

1 Corinthians 1:26–29 (NKJV)

26 For you see your calling, brethren, that **not many wise** according to the flesh, **not many mighty, not many noble**, are called.

27 But God has chosen the **foolish** things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the **weak** things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

28 and the **base** things of the world and the things which are **despised** God has chosen, and the **things which are not**, [nothings] to bring to nothing the things that are,

29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

God doesn't want anyone to get the glory except for Him. If we had nothing but the elites on God's team, they would make all over each other and not give God the glory. So, God chooses mainly the nobodies, those the world has no regard for who know they are nobodies and therefore are careful to give God all the glory. Now notice it doesn't say not ANY wise, mighty, or noble, but not many are called. Yes, there are a few.

But if you were a pious Jew in Jesus' time you would never have thought about selecting a dirty tax collector like Matthew to be an insider on Jesus' team. That would never have entered your mind. But God's ways are not our ways – they are better.

Note what Jesus said to Matthew. He simply said, "***Follow Me.***" This is the stuff of true conversion. We are not saved by following. We are saved by faith but if it is the right kind of faith it will follow. True faith follows.

Slide # 4**John 10:27–28 (NKJV)**

27 My sheep hear My voice, [respond in faith] and I know them, and they follow Me.

28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

Jesus makes it all about Him! Saving faith is about allegiance to Christ's person. Those who truly recognize Jesus as Lord follow Him. Imagine if Matthew had said, "***Let me think about it and I will get back to you.***" How do you suppose that would have gone? Well, we would have a completely different story in the gospels than the one we have.

Following is a "Lordship" issue and it is the fruit of true faith. If you truly believe on Jesus as Lord you want to obey Him. It is why people get baptized – because Christ says to do so. He says, "***If you are going to believe on Me I want you to testify of that in baptism***" and so we do so. Just like Matthew, when Jesus says, "***Follow Me***" true faith responds in following. Following is the fruit of true faith.

Now none of us follow perfectly but we do follow. We grow in grace. We grow in consistency. We often falter but we still follow imperfect as it may be. James says we all stumble in many ways (Ja. 3:2). There is a lot of stumbling on the course, but still, by the grace of God, we never completely leave the course and God makes adjustments in our lives as we go.

Matthew is an example of what Jesus came to do. He came to call sinners to repentance. And what does that look like? True repentance is seen in a person becoming a follower of Christ.

Matthew 9:10 (NKJV)

10 Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.

Matthew jumps right to the point while the other two synoptics (Mark and Luke – cf. Mk. 2:14-20; Lk. 5:27-35) give a little more background detail. We see there that this was a dinner held at the house of Matthew evidently with the purpose of Matthew introducing Jesus to his old friends and associates. He wanted them to know Jesus too.

Slide # 5**Luke 5:29 (NKJV)**

29 Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.

Note that this was a large gathering of “many tax collectors and sinners” who came and sat down with Jesus and His disciples. Wouldn’t it have been fun to have been there and just listened in on how this interaction went?

Here is Jesus and His disciples with this large group tax collectors and sinners. What did they talk about? The food, the weather, what Jesus had been doing? Probably all of the above.

Sinners in this context would have been outcasts of every stripe who were either morally compromised or didn’t closely follow the ceremonial codes of the Jews.

In the time of Jesus when people dined like this they typically would lie on mats and be propped up on one elbow while eating from a low table.

Slide # 6**Matthew 9:11 (NKJV)**

11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

The Pharisees were always hanging around on the periphery. Certainly, by their own admission they were not eating with this motley group of sinners, but they were close enough to see what was happening. They dogged Jesus’ footsteps to try and catch Him in something by which they might accuse Him in their efforts to bring Him down.

Note they didn't have the boldness to directly ask Jesus, so they approached His disciples with this question which was really more of an accusation than it was a legitimate question.

It was inconceivable to them that a true prophet would eat like this with tax collectors and sinners. That was considered defiling and serious compromise. And so, they in effect charged Jesus with "**guilt by association**". Having a meal with someone denoted fellowship – so here He was (in their minds) have fellowship with sinners.

The word **Pharisee** means "**separated one**". They were separatists who sought to separate themselves from any and everything that had any connotation of ceremonial defilement. But this emphasis on extreme externalism led to hypocritical self-righteousness. In Lk. 18 Jesus spoke a parable that contrasted a self-righteous Pharisee with that of a humble broken tax collector saying that, "**everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.**" (cf. Lk. 18:9-14).

Jesus was far harder on these religious hypocrites than He was on the pagans generally or the Roman authorities.

Slide # 7

The Pharisees had devised a slick disguise, concealing their self-righteousness and hypocrisy under a veneer of religious zeal.

– **John MacArthur**

Matthew 9:12 (NKJV)

12 When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

Note they were questioning Christ's disciples, but Jesus overheard them and interjected this: "**Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.**"

Those who are sick need a doctor – in this case a spiritual doctor who can heal them spiritually. Jesus is the great physician. Yes, Jesus healed physically but we saw last time in the example of the paralytic that Jesus put the emphasis on "forgiveness" (spiritual healing) first and foremost. This is the greatest concern.

Jesus is here speaking ironically because He definitely did not see the Pharisees as spiritually healthy.

Slide # 8

Matthew 5:20 (NKJV)

20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will **by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.**

Jesus is clear that this external/legalistic/hypocritical righteousness exhibited by the Pharisees will not get you into the kingdom.

Jesus didn't come to heal the self-righteous "healthy" but rather the humbled sick who admit they need help. Because tax collectors and sinners were more ready to acknowledge their need for a Savior Jesus could heal them.

Slide # 9

Luke 18:10–14 (NKJV)

10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to **me a sinner!**'

14 I tell you, **this man went down to his house justified** rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The Pharisees thought themselves to be spiritually "**well**" because of their strict conformity to ceremonial cleansing. Therefore they did not see their own sinfulness. This is where Matthew 5:3 comes in...

Slide # 10

Matthew 5:3 (NKJV)

3 "Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, For theirs is the **kingdom of heaven.**

Poor in spirit is the exact opposite of self-righteous. The poor in spirit know they are spiritually bankrupt and can't heal themselves. They acknowledge their need and look to Christ for spiritual healing. There is no salvation for the self-righteous – only for the humbled who recognize their need of Christ.

Matthew 9:13 (NKJV)

13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

This phrase, "***go and learn what this means***" serves as a rebuke to those who considered themselves experts in the OT Scriptures. This serves as a rebuke for not knowing what they should have known.

Jesus here quotes from Hosea 6:6 in the OT.

Slide # 11

Hosea 6:6 (NKJV)

6 For I desire **mercy** [Heb. "hesed"] and **not sacrifice**, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

The word "**mercy**" in Hos. 6:6 is the rich Hebrew word "**hesed**" which is often translated as "**loyal love**", "**steadfast love**" or "**covenant keeping faithfulness**". And then the verse says, "**the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.**" The key thing in context is that God really wanted them to know Him and thereby to reflect His heart.

In Hosea the Jews were facing serious disciplinary judgment because of their sin. So they thought we can just get right with God by brining lots of sacrifices and all will be well. But what they didn't understand is that God was more interested in their loyal love than He was in their religious sacrifices. God wanted their hearts – not merely religious rituals.

Jesus summarized the entire law as loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself (cf. Mt. 22:36-40). To really live out "hesed" (loyal love) looks like this – loving God and loving others. God wanted their loyal love that not only properly honors God, but also faithfully cares about others.

For the religious legalist its all about rituals and just jumping through hoops, but what God is really looking for is those who know His heart and therefore care about people. The Pharisees cared all about their legalism and ceremonies instead of people. Thus, they completely missed the point of Hos. 6:6.

Jesus here shows that the priority is the spirit of God's moral law over and above the ceremonial law. God wants people to know Him and His hesed (loyal) love and when they do that is reflected in love for others.

Slide # 12

Micah 6:8 (NKJV)

8 He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love **mercy** [Heb. "*hesed*"], And to walk humbly with your God?

Jeremiah 9:23–24 (NKJV)

23 Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;

24 But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising **lovingkindness**, [Heb. "*hesed*"] judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.

What I hear Jesus saying is that God doesn't care how religious you are, how many rituals you perform, how many regulations you follow – if you don't care about people you are completely missing what it means to truly know God. For God its all about people – lost people who need saving.

I was reminded of this "*hesed*" approach versus the harsh legalists approach when I read John MacArthur's booklet titled, "***What the Bible says about Homosexuality***". The book begins with this...

Slide # 13

"What does God think about homosexuals? Scripture is clear: He loves them.

It is God's love for sinners that proved the only means for their salvation:" – ***John MacArthur***

God's unfailing love (Hesed) cares about the spiritual needs of people. That is why Jesus went on to say, "***For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.***" This is what real spiritual faithfulness looks like. It is faithfully concerned about what concerns the heart of God.

There is irony in what Jesus is saying because there are “**none righteous, no, not one**” as seen in Romans 3:10. Jesus in an ironic sense is saying, “*You Pharisees who claim to be righteous cannot be helped because I came to call sinners to repentance.*”

You see the Pharisees were not really righteous as noted in Matt. 5:20; but they were **self-righteous**. They thought they were righteous on their own merits and therefore did not need a Savior. Such people don’t need help. Oh, they do but they don’t recognize it. Jesus can’t help those people!

The only people Jesus can help are sinners! If one is to be saved it starts by recognizing I am a sinner and I need to be saved – I need to be forgiven. Christ came to save sinners.

Slide # 14

1 Timothy 1:15 (NKJV)

15 This is a **faithful saying** and worthy of all acceptance, that **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners**, of whom I am chief.

If a person won’t admit they are a sinner then Christ can save them. The first requirement to be saved is to acknowledge you are a sinner.

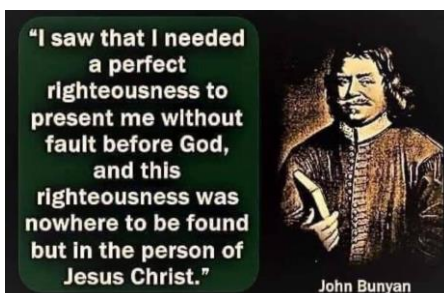
Slide # 15

Romans 5:8 (NKJV)

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that **while we were still sinners**, Christ died for us.

Christ came to save sinners. Christ came to call sinners to repentance. Christ died for us while we were still sinners. Christ didn’t die for saints – He died for sinners.

Slide # 16



The Bible talks about imputed righteousness which means the righteousness of Christ is put to our account.

Slide # 17

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)

21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

This is a GRACE deal. Christ took all our sin and we get all His righteousness. But how do we get this righteousness? The Bible is clear...

Slide # 18

Philippians 3:8–9 (NKJV)

8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

Note something very important in the text here. Christ didn't hang out with sinners to partake of their sin but to reach out to them and offer them healing – not to condone their sin but to call them to repentance. That is a whole different thing than carousing with them in their sin.

Slide # 19

Yes, Jesus hung out with prostitutes and drunkards and outcasts.

Here's the thing, though - by the time Jesus was finished with these people, they weren't prostitutes or drunkards or outcasts anymore.

Jesus came to transform people, not indulge them. Christianity is about surrender, not comfort. We are to align ourselves to his standard, not the other way around.

Slide # 20**1 Peter 4:3–5 (NKJV)**

3 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

4 In regard to these, they think it strange that **you do not run with them** in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.

5 They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

And we should note the context here was on Matthew’s turf (Matthew’s house) – not the sinners turf. This was not a carousing context but a home context where the focus could truly be on Jesus.

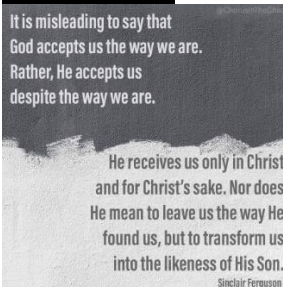
As a footnote observe that the older manuscripts here in Matt. 9:13 don’t have the words “**to repentance**”. However, this is a moot point because the parallel passage in Luke 5:32 does have it.

Slide # 21**Luke 5:32 (NKJV)**

32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

The “call” of Jesus is really the invitation of Jesus. He invites people to come to Him in repentance. This is what “mercy” looks like. It invites people to repentance out of love and concern for their souls.

The Pharisees insist that sinners become righteous to gain acceptance; Jesus insists that they be accepted as sinners – albeit repentant sinners.

Slide # 22

We often say, “To get them saved you first have to get them lost”. To appreciate the good news people first have to know the bad news. In order to have a Savior you first have to realize you are a sinner in need of a Savior.

Romans is the most systematic presentation of the gospel that we have in the NT. The first theme that Paul develops at length is that all people are sinners as seen in Romans 1-3. He shows that pagans are sinners, moralists are sinners, and religionists are sinners. And it builds to this climactic point:

Slide # 23

Romans 3:23 (NKJV)

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The standard is God's very glory and we all come far short. We are all spiritually sick in need of healing; we are all sinners in need of repentance. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. The self-proclaimed self-righteous don't need Jesus – or so they think.

Jesus is the great physician who heals the spiritually sick. But the medicine He uses (so to speak) is repentance. The way the sick get healed is through repentance.

The word repentance (Gk. metanoia) means "to change your mind". It is a change of mind about sin and about Jesus. In repentance one admits they are a sinner –a sin sick sinner who can't heal them self and therefore they need Jesus (the great physician) to heal them. In repentance we change our mind about Jesus as Savior and we change our mind about Jesus as Lord. We change our mind from rebellion to submission recognizing Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Repentance is a complete change of mind that results in a changed life. Repentance is an essential element of true saving faith. It is only a change of mind kind of faith that will get you into the kingdom.

In one of the Napoleon wars, Lord Nelson defeated the French navy. The defeated admiral brought his flagship alongside Nelson's vessel and went aboard to make his surrender. He approached Nelson smilingly, with his sword swinging at his side. ***He held out his hand to the victor.***

Nelson made no response to this gesture but said quietly, ***"Your sword first, sir."*** Laying down the sword was a visible token of surrender. (This is the spirit of true repentance)

*Make me a captive, Lord, And then I shall be free,
Force me to render up my sword And I shall conqueror be.
(George Matheson)*

Matthew 9:14 (NKJV)

14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?”

This was a good question. According to Mark 2:18 at this very time the disciples of John and the Pharisees were fasting while they saw Jesus and His disciples feasting in Matthew’s house. That didn’t seem right to them. “Hey we’re all serious about God over here in our fasting and how is it that you guys are feasting away with no thought for fasting.”

To begin with note that John the Baptist had sort of an austere type of ministry as he called the people to repentance. He was sort of an ascetic to begin with living in the wilderness eating locusts and wild honey (cf. Mt. 3:4). So, the Pharisees and John the Baptist’s disciples both put an emphasis on regular fasting (cf. Lk. 5:33).

We need to step back and look at the place of fasting as ordained by God in the OT. The idea of fasting in the OT was to humble yourself before God and focus on Him. It made God THE PRIORITY! Fasting signified setting aside self-orientation and focusing solely on God. It often signified contrition for sin and getting right with God.

The only fast required under the Law of Moses was a fast for the annual Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 16:29-31; Num. 29:7). Fasting on this day portrayed brokenness over sin (Lev. 16:29). The sacrifices and rituals that took place on the Day of Atonement were temporary pictures that ultimately looked forward to the permanent atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

In addition to this the nation Israel fasted in times of national calamity (cf. Jer. 36:9; Joel 1:14). Only later in connection with the Babylonian Captivity and after did Israel add special “fasting days” to their religious calendar (cf. Zech. 7:2-5; 8:19; Isa. 58:3-7). Pious Jews then began to practice fasting twice a week – on Monday and Thursday (cf. Lk. 18:12).

So, fasting in general is the idea of intensively focusing on God in a singular way. It has the idea of humbling yourself in brokenness before God.

Slide # 24

Fasting is not commanded in the New Testament; neither is it a measure of spirituality, but the practice is assumed and recognized

as beneficial. It is a private matter and has a purpose beyond mere physical discipline – to focus one’s attention upon a task, need, or personal relationship with God even to the exclusion of concern for what one will eat. – **Ed Glasscock**

An observation: People tend to gravitate towards “legalism”. We have this bent that tends to want to lock into rituals and routines that we think somehow make us more spiritual when in fact they don’t.

In the Didache (an early Christian teaching manual in the early 2nd century) Christians are exhorted: “***And you must not fast as the hypocrites do, [the Jews] for they fast on Monday and Thursday; you must observe your fast on Wednesday and Friday!***” So what they ended up doing is exchanging one legalistic formality for another. Stick with the N.T. teaching – the doctrine of the apostles and you will be consistent with sound doctrine.

Here was Jesus’ response:

Matthew 9:15 (NKJV)

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.

Here Jesus associated fasting with mourning - portraying it as a symbol of sorrow. Understand in context that Jesus was on the scene as the King presenting the kingdom as being at hand.

In the OT the bridegroom metaphor is often used in reference to God and the kingdom is pictured as a coming Messianic banquet (cf. Isa. 25:6-7; 54:5-6; 62:4-5; Hos. 2:16-20; Ps. 45). John the Baptist described himself as the friend of the bridegroom in John 3:29.

Thus, Christ being the Messiah and presenting the dawning of the Messianic Age was no time for fasting. Rather it was a time of celebration. The KING is here presenting the kingdom (on the condition of repentance of course).

Christ is the Messianic bridegroom and a wedding is no place for fasting. Rather it is a time for feasting and celebration. The problem was that these people didn’t properly understand WHO Jesus was as the Messianic bridegroom (cf. Mt. 22:2; 25:1; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-32; Rev. 19:7; 21:2).

They were completely out of sync with God's program and what God was doing. Hence, Israel ended up rejecting Jesus as their Messiah and the kingdom was put on hold.

And Jesus alludes to this rejection saying, "***But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.***"

This "taken away" is not simply a departure but rather portrays a violent taking away as in reference to His crucifixion (cf. Isa. 53:8). This certainly would be a time of fasting and sorrow (cf. Jn. 16:16-22).

Slide # 25

John 16:20–22 (NKJV)

20 Most assuredly, I say to you that **you will weep and lament**, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but **your sorrow will be turned into joy.**

21 A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.

22 Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and **your joy no one will take from you.**

Certainly, in the crucifixion there was sorrow for the disciples' but the resurrection turned their sorrow into joy.

As we study the whole counsel of God we find there are special occasions where fasting is appropriate (cf. Mt. 4:2; 6:16-18; Acts 9:9; 13:2; 14:23). However, the dominant characteristic for Christians is now to be joy and not sorrow. In Nehemiah's time the people were told in Neh. 8:10, "...the joy of the Lord is your strength." Paul said...

Philippians 4:4 (NKJV)

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

The Christian life is described overall as a feast – not a fast.

Slide # 26

1 Corinthians 5:7–8 (NKJV)

7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

8 Therefore **let us keep the feast**, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Immediately following the Passover day was the 7 day feast of unleavened bread. The picture is this: We are saved by the blood of the lamb and now we should live holy lives that are not corrupted by sin. Passover corresponds in type to the sacrifice of Christ. The feast of unleavened bread corresponds to holy living that follows having applied the Passover.

But the point is the Christian experience is an ongoing FEAST – not a perpetual FAST. Yes, we may occasionally give ourselves to a time of fasting and prayer as Paul says in 1 Cor. 7:5, but the overall emphasis is that we are keeping a FEAST.

Slide # 27

Today the church is not to be fasting in grief but living in the power of the Holy Spirit, victoriously awaiting reunion with the Lord. Fasting can still serve the purpose of focusing and spiritual refreshing, but for the church it is not a sign of sorrow. – **Ed Glasscock**

I was visiting with a brother who is going through some things and so I asked Him, “**Who is Jesus to you?**” He responded, “**He is everything to me.**” Indeed, that is the right answer. As true believers...

He is our Lord – follow Him.

He is our Savior – the healer of repentant sinners.

He is our Joy – the kingdom hope of all who know Him.

So I ask you: “Who is Jesus to you?” This is the all-important issue in time and for all eternity.

“Who is Jesus to you?”