

JESUS BRINGS THE JOY

Jesus' ministry was so unique that the Jewish religious leaders considered it unorthodox and illegitimate. John the Baptist's disciples also had questions. As noted in Matthew 9:14-15, they asked Jesus why His disciples did not FAST as they and the Pharisees did. Jesus responded with this provocative question: "***Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?***"

The obvious answer is "no" because the wedding is a time of celebration and joy – not a time of mourning related to fasting. And what Jesus says next builds on this, as seen in Matthew 9:16-17.

Matthew 9:16-17 (NKJV)

16 No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse.

17 Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

Here we have two parables or illustrations showing that the new paradigm that Jesus was presenting was incompatible with the old Judaistic paradigm.

Everyone knows you can't use an unshrunk piece of cloth to patch up an old garment. As it shrinks, it will just tear and make things worse. Likewise, putting new wine into old brittle wineskins would cause the fermenting wine to burst the skins. Thus the new and the old are clearly incompatible!

The context here is important to properly understand what Jesus was saying. We have noted that often Matthew presents things thematically and not necessarily in a strict chronological order. However, in all 3 synoptic gospels (that is Matthew, Mark, and Luke) the illustration of garments and wineskins immediately follows the question about **fasting** (cf. Mt. 9:16-17; Mk. 2:21-22; Lk. 5:36-39). So, the context of what Jesus is saying here relates to the FASTING practices of the disciples of John and the Pharisees, and by application their ascetic tendencies in general.

And the point is the old garment of these Judaistic practices was incompatible with the new **joyous** realities brought into place by Jesus. What Jesus brought was not merely a patch to Judaism; rather, it was brand new wine (so to speak) which required new wineskins (cf. Jn. 4:23-24).

Note the question about fasting in verse 14 came from the disciples of John the Baptist. John's ministry was about the brokenness of preparation as he called the people out on their sin and called for repentance. Jesus' ministry brought a celebration that the King was now on the scene. John, in a sense, brought the "mourning" while Jesus brought the "joy".

Note in the Bible wine is often associated with celebration and joy – not the abuse of it but the proper use and enjoyment of it. In addition, "wine" is a symbol of the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph. 5:18).

What was now different could be summed up in one word – namely "JESUS". Fasting denoted mourning, but Jesus brings the JOY. John the Baptist had a ministry in which FASTING was fitting. But now Christ (the bridegroom) was here, and the appropriate response to those receiving Him is that of joy and celebration. The old ascetic ways of Judaism in general now had to give way to a fresh newness of JOY found in the presence of Jesus.

Jesus brings the JOY!

John 16:21–24 (NKJV)

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.

23 "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.

24 Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

With the coming of Jesus comes unparalleled JOY which is not reflected in the old ways prior to Him. It is a whole new day – a day of JOY! Yes, as believers they had life, and they had joy under the old system, but Jesus came that we might have life and "have it more abundantly." (Jn. 10:10)

Jesus didn't come merely to reform Jewish religion but to bring about a whole NEW reality of JOY that is found in Him alone. We are no longer under the law of Moses as a code to live by, but rather under the law of Christ. In effect, Christ Himself is now the code we live under. "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (Jn. 1:17)

The book of Colossians makes it very clear that we don't just add a little patch of Jesus to the old system. We don't add Jesus to legalism; we don't add Jesus to asceticism. No, rather Jesus stands ALONE, and He stands SUFFICIENT!

Colossians 2:10 (NKJV)

10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

Colossians 2:16–17 (NKJV)

16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,

17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Colossians 3:11 (NKJV)

11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

The shadows of the old have given way to the substance of Christ Who is now our all in all. We are complete in Him! Christ is not merely an add-on; He is not merely a patch. He is the whole NEW deal, and He is sufficient! He is our full JOY!

Footnote: There is considerable continuity between the OT Scriptures and Christ's ministry, but the religious system as a system under Judaism cannot be mixed with NEW realities found in Christ. Any attempt to do so results in theological disaster. Groups like "*The Hebrew Roots Movement*" that try to conflate the teachings of Christ and Hebrew traditions and the Mosaic Law inevitably result in serious legalistic error. Note very clearly that Christ taught that the old ways and His new ways were not compatible. You can't have it both ways. You can't live under Christ as your code and at the same time live under law as your code. It's one or the other.

Romans 6:14 (NKJV)

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Romans 10:4 (NKJV)

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

1 Corinthians 9:21 (NKJV)

21 to those who are without law, as without law (**not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ**), that I might win those who are without law;

We are not under the law of Moses as a code to live by, but we are under the law of Christ, and His chief guiding spiritual law is LOVE – the law of LOVE (cf. Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:6, 13-14). The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, etc. (Gal. 5:22-23).

By the way, legalism and joy don't go together. Have you ever seen a happy legalist? The only time they are happy is when they critically catch someone not keeping their foolish forms of legalism! JOY goes together with Jesus and the new liberty found in Him! Jesus is our JOY!