

Fasting & The Kingdom of God

Mark 2:18-22

Introduction: Mark 2:18-22 - What I believe is exposed and expressed not only in what I say and but also in what I do.

First Century Judaism - Alms giving, prayer and fasting were essential elements of being a faithful Jew in the First century. (Matthew 6:1-18)

Mark 2:18-20 - Fasting should play some role in a believer's life and when done properly it has significant spiritual benefits. Three questions:

First, what place did fasting have in the newly announced 'Kingdom of God' while Jesus was on the earth? (19)

Second, what place does fasting have in the Kingdom of God after Jesus returns to the Father and the Church is birthed? (20) The 'absolute fast' is reserved for spiritual emergencies and Moses, Elijah and Jesus are prime examples - 3 days.

Finally, what place does fasting have in my life today? Daniel 1:15; 10:3 points me to the physical/spiritual benefits of controlled or partial fasting. (Matthew 6:1-18)

Conclusion: Fasting can expose things that control me. (Psalm 69:10; Matthew 4:4)

In Matthew 6:1-18 Jesus presents two ideas: First, Jesus says, fasting should be part of a believer's life with Christ. Second, Jesus says, giving, praying and fasting are essentially laying up treasures in heaven when they are done properly.

Mark 2:21-22 - Two illustrations - Old cloth and old wine, new cloth and new wine

Conclusion: Christians are joyful people in light of the fact that we are recipients of eternal life in Jesus Christ. Giving, praying and fasting keep us grounded as we await the return of the Bridegroom and the completion of the promised Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

New life in Christ cannot be confined to the 'structures of the Old Covenant'. That structure pointed to Jesus Christ, it did not define life in Christ and the forms and rituals that were born out of that structure are replaced by the simple worship and forms of the New Testament Church.

Jesus' presence is the opening act of the Kingdom of God, but Jesus would be briefly removed with great sorrow (Isaiah 53:8). Jesus speaks of his own death but also that his followers must follow him on the Way of the cross.