

**Jesus: Out With The Old And In With The New**

Mark 2:18-22

TO: LEGISLATORS

FROM: RALPH DROLLINGER

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*Danielle and I hope that you had a blessed Easter with your family back home. We had almost our whole family with us and received the good news that our third grandchild is on the way! How great is our God! We look forward to seeing you this week.*

**INTRODUCTION**

This is a stimulating passage to work through with you this week. I should say from the get-go that it is easy to make inappropriate applications from it. So we need to proceed carefully in our exegesis, attempting to bring to our understanding what the intent of the author and the Holy Spirit is in providing us with this passage. Having said that, this represents the first time Mark includes a parable by Jesus. Often, Jesus would call on commonly-known physical elements of the Palestinian world, using them in parallel fashion to teach a spiritual truth. Picturesque new cloth and new wine are in keeping with this technique of the Master.

The main intent that we should carry away from this passage is that Jesus' ministry and message is a clear departure from the past. The joy of new life in Christ was not to be confused with keeping appended OT rituals such as the pharisaical outward requirement of fasting. Christianity is not intended to be amalgamated with OT traditional Judaism. New life in Christ isn't so much about rules and regulations. "The parables illustrate the radical posture and presumption of Jesus. Jesus is the new patch and the new wine. His is not an attachment, addition, or appendage to the status quo. He cannot be integrated into or contained by preexisting structures, even Judaism..."<sup>1</sup> This summary conclusion of the passage is supported by Jesus' description of Himself as a Bridegroom in a wedding. This unique metaphor is intended to communicate that trusting in and walking with Him is to be an outrageously celebrative, joyful experience! It is the indwelling Holy Spirit that leads, instructs and empowers the follower of Christ to keep the commandments of Scripture in their heart—versus a rigorous pharisaical religious formula of outward conformity to inflated OT rules and regulations. Notice how the following five verses relate to this subject. What follows are three illustrations of inappropriate attempts to mix Jesus with other religious systems. Rather than combine religions, Jesus unabashedly communicates with singularity, "Out with the old and in with the new!"

**THE PASSAGE: MARK 2:18-22**

*And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" 19 And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom do not fast, do they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 "But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. 21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. 22 "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."*

**I. OUT WITH EXCESSIVE FASTING****vss. 19-20**

Earlier in Mark we have studied the various complaints against Jesus. At the start of Mark 2, He set off a commotion when He claimed He could forgive sins. And right before this passage He greatly irritates the Pharisees by dining with Matthew and his fellow tax-collector friends. Mark records a third complaint in this week's study: Jesus' refusal to fast. Why? Whereas the Mosaic Law prescribed only one day of fasting per *year* (on the Day of Atonement) the Pharisees had upped it to two days per *week*. It follows that Jesus' non-compliance became a third source of aggravation. Clearly however His disciples, by not fasting were not violating the OT law. What was Jesus underscoring by His insubordination to their legalism? States Barnhouse:<sup>2</sup>

**THERE IS NO SPIRITUAL VALUE IN PERFORMING  
OUTWARD RELIGIOUS RITUALS THAT BEAR NO  
RELATION TO WHAT IS IN THE HEART**

Jesus refused to sanction their extra-biblical standards. In that He refers to Himself in this passage as the Bridegroom, fasting was incongruous because fasting related to experiencing personal sorrow over sin and personal repentance, wherein Jesus was saying that His presence was cause for laughter, merriment, joy and song.<sup>3</sup> His statement then, in verse 19 in



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this week's passage, proved quite irksome. Jesus' explanation flew in their face as His answer overtly turned the table. Two more somewhat similar incidents (to follow in the week's ahead) and they will seek to destroy Him (cf. 3:6). The essence of this passage is this: Even though Jesus was in their midst—the personification of the Gospel—His opponents were greatly agitated by the fact that He wouldn't bow to their vastly inferior religious "system." Fasting was illustrative of their legalism; a religion of sacramental moralism. As such "it is incongruous to the free spirit of Christianity."<sup>4</sup> Here then, Mark has recorded Jesus' tight, powerful response to the inappropriateness of their religiosity. Contextually what follows are His two broader, justifying principles...

### II. OUT WITH OLD CLOTH vs. 21

The following two parables illustrate that the new is not only incompatible with the old, it bursts the old. New life in Him—the Gospel—cannot be restricted to or contained by the now greatly twisted forms of Judaism. In verse 21, Jesus did not come to patch up an old religion, or to preserve it, He came to personify and offer salvation, "I am the way and the truth and the life..." He said in John 14:6. His mission was to birth His Church, Christianity. Years later, in Acts 15:1-11, at the start of the Church Age, long after Jesus' ascension, Christians who had overlooked this clear teaching of Jesus attempted to amalgamate their new found salvation in Christ with OT Judaism and attempt to keep the Mosaic Law. Appropriately so, such efforts were quickly dismissed by the Elders of the Church of Jerusalem. Illustrative of a worse tear occurring, their attempts at religion synthesis resulted in Gospel distortion. Further, Paul condemns this same aberration (called the error of the Judaizers) in his epistle to the Galatians (cf. Gal. 1:8-9) with unmistakably strong words. Jesus and Christianity were never intended to be a "reformed sect" of Judaism. Further, in the polemically-natured Galatians' epistle Paul aptly states how the Mosaic Law of the OT (versus religion of the OT) was indeed meant to fit with Christianity: In 3:24 he states, "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith." The OT law is intended to elucidate ones' unrighteousness in comparison to God's holiness, thus prompting one's need for a Savior, Jesus Christ. In a similar vein, Jesus states in the Sermon on the Mount "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill" (Mt. 5:17). Note an important distinctive: Jesus condemns the religion of legalism, but not the Law itself. The Law has its ongoing purposes, not

only in justification (Gal. 3:24) but sanctification (Mt. 5:17), as will be developed in the application section below.

### III. OUT WITH OLD WINE SKINS vs. 22

Stereophonic to the unshrunk cloth parable, Jesus personifies the new wine mentioned in this passage. He is not compatible with Old Testament religion, herein old wine skins. Conversely, Jesus is pouring Himself into His Church (cf. Mt. 16:18). Both of these parables have a definite sense of finality in their Greek construction. Akin to John 14:6 they punctuate the singularity of true saving faith in Jesus Christ alone.

### APPLICATION

Legalism is the practice of equating spirituality with requirements that are in addition to those that actually exist in Scripture. This is clearly seen and condemned by Jesus in these passages relative to fasting. Libertinism on the other hand is just as poisonous. This is one who disregards the Mosaic Law in part or whole, negating the truths of Matthew 5:17. Libertinism is the practice of equating spirituality with requirements that are less than those that actually exist in Scripture.<sup>5</sup> Paul foresaw this second possible response in the life of the believer when he penned Romans 6:1-2 wherein he states, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" Summarily, rather than add to or subtract from the standard of Scripture, one need be biblical. That is to say where Scripture is silent we have liberty, and where Scripture speaks we need be obedient. Strive to be a Biblicist, versus a legalist or a libertinist. Lastly, check your perspectives: to the legalist, the Biblicist may appear to be libertine. To the libertine, the Biblicist may appear to be legalistic. Don't err here. Learn what the Word of God teaches and does not teach, as these cited passages indicate that Scripture warns about the excesses of legalism and libertinism.

<sup>1</sup> Edwards, James R. *The Gospel According to Mark, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) p. 92

<sup>2</sup> Barnhouse, Donald Grey *Mark: The Servant Gospel* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1988) p. 40

<sup>3</sup> In Matthew 6:16-18 Jesus did not oppose fasting, rather He condemned it as an outward show or form, versus if it was a genuine expression of sorrow. Fasting today then, done with proper motives should always be a private affair between you, your heart and Christ, versus others. Further, nowhere in the NT is fasting prescribed as a sacrament akin to baptism or communion.

<sup>4</sup> Gould, Ezra P *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark, International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1996) p. 47

<sup>5</sup> Libertinism is also known as Theological Antinomianism.