



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Jesus Teaches About Fasting

MAY 29, 2013

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In the Gospel According to Luke (AD 60-61), Luke, a gentile, is writing to Theophilus so that he would know the exact truth and record regarding the things he had been taught about Jesus the Messiah. Luke provided numerous testimonies of Jesus' identity as the Savior and Messiah. After Jesus had spent forty days and nights in the wilderness and not having food during that time and under unsuccessful continual temptations or testing by the devil, Jesus returned to His hometown, Nazareth in Galilee, to begin His earthly ministry. Jesus shared that no prophet is welcome in his hometown and likewise His hometown rejected Jesus and attempted to kill Him. Jesus escaped and traveled 20 miles northwest to Capernaum, on the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum became Jesus' unofficial ministry headquarters. As was His custom, Jesus was in the synagogue on the Sabbath, reading scripture and teaching. Jesus, during His ministry, traveled to many cities and physically healed people of demons, disease and death. Jesus began to call His apostles and challenge rituals.

“And they said to Him, “The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers, the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same, but Yours eat and drink.” And Jesus said to them, “You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? “But the days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days.” And He was also telling them a parable: “No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. “And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. “But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. “And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, ‘The old is good enough.’ ” (Luke 5:33-39 NASB)

Pharisees challenged the piety of the disciples. The Pharisees and scribes following Jesus attempted to find teachings and behaviors that were contrary to their teachings, rituals and laws. Fasting was an OT law that was required once a year on the Day of Atonement and at other times voluntary and for a specific purpose. While scripture records that Jesus fasted in Matthew (4:2) and Luke (4:2), Jesus' fast was specific and done in private. Pharisees raised the question on fasting because they fasted publicly, generally two times a week, as a ritual and to display their spirituality. The Pharisees attempted to draw Jesus into a conflict by citing that John the Baptist often fasted and prayed, so why did not Jesus' disciples fast?

Jesus teaches about fasting. Luke records that Jesus responds with several illustrations. In the first example, Jesus is the Bridegroom and while He is present they should be joyful and enjoy the feast and not fast. Fasting would be appropriate later after He is gone. In the second example, a parable, Jesus is referring to the expectation of the OT prophecy and the fulfillment in Him. They, the Pharisees, are the old, the law, and He is the new, grace and mercy. In the third illustration, also a parable, Jesus was teaching that the old rituals, like ceremonial fasting practiced by the Pharisees and John's disciples were not a fit for the new wine of the New Covenant time. Jesus, the Messiah came to fulfill the law. The faithful would be made righteous through Jesus the Christ not through keeping the law or ceremonial ritual acts.

For Your Consideration:

- Do you practice public piety designed to make you look good?
- Are you challenged by the lack of public piety of others?
- Do you privately own your faith? Is it based upon what you do or what Jesus did for you?

BIBLE STUDIES

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