

The Gospel According to Mark
The New and Better Way
Mark 2:18-22
Sunday, April 26, 2020

Introduction

As more and more people continued to hear and respond to the teaching of Jesus there was a growing concern among the religious leaders of the day.

As we move through Mark chapters 2 and 3 Mark records a series of five events in which these religious leaders are confronting and questioning Jesus. While we know their desire is to discredit Jesus we can still be thankful for their questions, because as Jesus responds we get a greater insight into who Jesus is and what He came to accomplish.

A Question about Fasting (2:18)

- **Fasting during the time of Jesus** - In the time of Jesus fasting had become a common practice among the religious groups of the day. The Pharisees fasted every Monday and Thursday (Luke 18:11-12).
- **The Question** – Since fasting had become such a common practice among the devout, questions arise about why Jesus and His disciples are not fasting.

The Response of Jesus (2:19-22)

- **A time for feasting, not fasting (2:19)** – As He often does, Jesus responds in a parable. He speaks of a wedding celebration and the fact that no one fasts during a wedding feast. It's a time of joy and celebration, not a time for mourning or sober reflection.
- **The meaning of the parable** – It's clear that Jesus is referring to Himself as the bridegroom and to his disciples as the wedding guests. When Jesus was present the disciples couldn't fast, it was a time of joy.
- **The implications of the parable** – While the New Testament speaks often of Jesus as the bridegroom, in the OT the groom or the husband of the people of God was always God Himself. As Jesus uses this picture He is subtly making a significant claim – He is God, the long awaited Bridegroom coming for His Bride.

A Time of New Realities (Two more parables) (2:21-22)

- After His initial response Jesus goes on to explain more about His coming by the use of two short parables. Each parable makes the same point: With the coming of Jesus the forms and traditions of the past are being replaced by something new and better.

- **An old garment and a new patch (vs. 21)** – An old, torn garment and a patch made of new fabric are the basis of this first parable. Jesus states this as a know fact: no one would add a new patch to an old garment – the result would be the ruining of them both.
 - **The meaning of the parable** – Through Jesus's life and death He became the mediator of a New Covenant between God and man. Jesus has not come to be added to the old forms and traditions; He came bringing something new and better (Jeremiah 31:31-34).
- **An old wineskin and new wine (vs. 22)** - Today we keep wine in bottles, at this time they stored wine in containers made out of animal skins. New skins were flexible and would stretch to accommodate fermenting and expanding wine, but old wineskins would become stiff and brittle and would burst under the pressure of new wine.
 - **The meaning of the parable** – Jesus has come as the new wine. What is new is not to be added onto or contained within what is old. Jesus came to fulfill the promises of God and to give form to the many shadows of the Old Covenant (Hebrews 10).

A Day for Fasting Will Come (2:20)

- **The bridegroom will be taken away** – The words and the imagery in this verse were meant to be shocking. It wouldn't make sense for a bridegroom to be *taken away* from the wedding celebration, but this is what Jesus describes.
- **The meaning** – This is a reference to the necessary death of Jesus in order to fulfill all that He came to accomplish. For a time the bridegroom was taken away (in death) and now He has gone away for a time, but one day He will return for His Bride.

Implications for Today

- **Recognize Jesus** – So many who saw Jesus never recognized Him, and the same is true today. So many think of Jesus as something to add on to all they are already doing to earn right standing with God. But Jesus came as one and only way to be saved. He is the new and better way!
- **Rejoice in Jesus** – Jesus said that His disciples could not fast because of the joy of His presence. While we are not with Jesus in the flesh, through of our union with Him we have reason to rejoice! He is with us now and we will be with Him for eternity.
- **Remain watchful and faithful** – Jesus is coming again for His bride! As we live in this time of waiting we must remain watchful and faithful; faithful in our obedience and faithful in our proclamation of Jesus.