

§44: THE QUESTION ABOUT FASTING

Matt. 9:14–17; Mark 2:18–22; Luke 5:33–39

Complaint of the Disciples of John and the Pharisees

Matt. 9:14	Mark 2:18	Luke 5:33
<p>14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying: Why do we and the Pharisees often fast, but your disciples do not fast?</p>	<p>18 And the disciples of John and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him: Why do the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?</p>	<p>33 And they said to Him: The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers, likewise also those of the Pharisees; but yours eat and drink.</p>

The Bridgroom

Matt. 9:15	Mark 2:19–20	Luke 5:34–35
<p>15 And Jesus said to them: The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they?</p> <p>But days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.</p>	<p>19 And Jesus said to them: The attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.</p> <p>20 But days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.</p>	<p>34 And Jesus said to them: you cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you?</p> <p>35 But days will come, and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days.</p>

Old and New Garments

Matt. 9:16	Mark 2:21	Luke 5:36
<p>16 But no one puts a patch of a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for its patch takes away from the garment. and a worse tear results.</p>	<p>21 But no one sews a patch of a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch takes away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results.</p>	<p>36 And He was telling a parable to them: No one tears a patch from a new garment and puts <i>it</i> on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.</p>

Old and New Wine

Matt. 9:17	Mark 2:22	Luke 5:37–39
<p>17 Neither do they put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine is spilled out, and the wineskins are ruined.</p>	<p>22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the wineskins, and the wine is lost, and <i>also</i> the wineskins.</p>	<p>37 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the wineskins, and it will be spilled out, and the wineskins are ruined.</p>

<p>But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.</p>	<p>But new wine <i>goes</i> into new wineskins.</p>	<p>38 But new wine must be put into new wineskins. 39 [And] no one after drinking old wishes for new, for he says: The old is suitable.</p>
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Notes

1. **Fast.** Voluntary abstention from food. There was one regular fast for the Jews—the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), and there were occasional public fasts proclaimed from time to time. In Jesus’ day fasting had become a public demonstration of piety. Fasting itself, however, was still condoned by Jesus and the apostles (see also Acts 13:2–3; 14:23). We will deal more with the subject in the Sermon on the Mount, §66. For now see also Isaiah 58; Zech. 7–8.
2. **Attendants of the bridegroom.** Literally, “the sons of the wedding hall/bridal chamber.” On the cultural setting for weddings, see Notes on §21: The Marriage at Cana, John 2:1–11.
3. **New wine.** It is not grape-juice, for new wine is already able to burst wineskins. It is the freshly fermented wine having just completed the stage known as primary fermentation. This stage took place in open vats, for nothing could withstand the tremendous pressure of this most active phase of the wine-making process. Afterwards, the new wine was put into new, elastic wineskins. Then the wine undergoes the less volatile secondary fermentation. Older wineskins would not have the necessary elasticity and/or porosity to handle even the slight output of gases produced during the secondary stage. Usually, the wine was then stored and aged. Thus, new wine is freshly fermented wine whereas old wine is wine that has been bottled and stored for some time.