

MATTHEW: THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

LESSON 25 – NEW WINESKINS – MATTHEW 9:14-17

MATTHEW 9:14-17

Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”

1. The text divides between the question of John’s disciples and Jesus’ response. Jesus’ response makes use of three distinct images. The first image has a positive focus. The second and third images provide a warning to those who have not yet come to believe in Jesus. What is the accepted knowledge about these three images?
 - a. First image – Wedding feast with a bridegroom
 - b. Second image – Patching an old garment with an unshrunk patch of new cloth
 - c. Third image – Putting new wine into old wineskins
2. The pious volunteer fasting of John’s disciples and Pharisees is contrasted with Jesus’ disciples in the question. The question shows the suspicion from people why Jesus’ disciples are distinctively different. The followers of Jesus are being revealed as different. What do the followers of Jesus believe has arrived?
3. What does making fasting a central part of the practice of discipleship indicate about the times being joyous or not?
4. In the OT, the restoration of relationship between God and his people is compared to that of a marriage. Jesus’ first response to the question is pulling from a library of images present in the people’s theology. What do the following passages reveal about the expectations of the people for the bridegroom? (Isaiah 54:5-6; 62:4-5; Hosea 2:16-22)

5. Jesus' claim as the bridegroom has implications for people understanding who he is (Matthew 1:23; 22:1-14; 25:1-13). If Jesus is the bridegroom for the people, who is Jesus claiming to be?

6. How is the image of Jesus as the bridegroom an invitation for an exclusive relationship? Jesus is not an add-on, no augmentation.

7. How is the third image pointing forward to the Passion Narrative?
 - a. Matthew 26:65 – the high priest “tore his garments” as a sign that he rejected Jesus' true identity as God's Son. The language of 9:16, “a worse tear happens” finds a connection to Matthew 27:51, what is the greater tear?

 - b. The refusal of the high priest to let the new wine of Jesus' identity be placed into the new wineskins of faith in Jesus and his authority to forgive sins will result in the tearing of Judaism.

The issue at stake in 9:14-17 is Christology. What do you make of Jesus? The answer to this question is the one teaching by which the church stands or falls. When we try to pull Jesus into our orbit as an add-on to our own worldview, there will be a tearing apart. Saving faith is not general faith in God, but involves looking to Jesus. Jesus is the object of our faith because he is the manifestation of God's omnipotence and saving acts brought together.

8. How does Jesus show the connection between omnipotence and saving work in Matthew 9:28?