

“ALL Things Need To BE New”

Matthew 9:14-17

January 11, 2026

INTRO: *We are 11 days into 2026... What's new?*

(For true Christians, the answer is **EVERYTHING!**
...for everyone else: “Not much.”)

PRAYER

CONTEXT:

- Once again we’re in a place where context is key!
- Matthew’s Gospel on Jesus Christ’s Gospel...
- Matthew 1-3... Matthew 4... Matthew 5-7...
- Matthew 8-9: Cleansed Leper; Centurion; Healed crowds; **Count the Cost**; Storms calmed; Demons cast out; Paralytic healed; “**strange things**” seen; Matthew called & throws a “*Matthew party*” **feast**

BIG IDEA: **ONLY** Messiah’s **NEW** & true, miraculously transformed missionaries, can & will BE righteous... & redeemed!

PREVIEW:

1. Man’s Question(s)
2. Messiah’s Answer(s)
3. Missional Message(s)

TEXT:

Matthew 9:14-17

I. Man's Question(s)

The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came to Him, saying, "Why do we, the disciples of John, and likewise those of the Pharisees fast often and make prayers, but Your disciples eat and drink [and] do not fast?"

A NEW QUESTION from NEW DISCIPLES:

- New “disciples of John” enter the text’s account...
- The topic and focal point **seems to be** “fasting.”
- The context is once again one of contrast...
 - Surface contrast is fasting vs. feasting...
 - Deeper contrast is relationship to Christ...
 - Deepest contrast is old vs. new in Christ!

We owe no response to rebel rousers. BUT...
We DO owe honest answers to honest questions.

*a. Always ask the question: “**What do you want?**”*

**THE ULTIMATE AIM OF THE PHARISEES
IS DISCORD, DIVISION, & DESTRUCTION.**

b. The answer could have been a better question:

- i. *WHY do you fast?*
- ii. *Why DO you fast?*
- iii. *Why do YOU fast?*

VIDEO: *Fasting & Prayer*

Asking Christ's disciples why they don't fast while they are with Jesus would be like someone asking children why they aren't texting their parents, when they were actually walking & talking with their mom in dad...

II. Messiah's Answer(s)

- **Watch this incredible Gospel proclamation!**
- Watch how Jesus says the same thing 3 ways...
 - New LOVE & FAMILY *(Appropriate)*
 - New LIGHT & FAITH *(Adequate)*
 - New LIFE & FORCE *(Atomic!)*
 - SEE the: Saved... Sanctified... Spirit-filled
 -
- **Watch & learn how our Lord lived & loved...**

v.15... ***And Jesus said to them,***

A. New LOVE & FAMILY (APPROPRIATE)

“Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away (violently abducted or removed) from them, and then they will fast in those days.”

Jesus' self-identification as “the Bridegroom” draws upon Old Testament covenant imagery where the LORD is portrayed as Husband to His people
(Isaiah 54:5; Hosea 2:19-20).

**BY APPLYING THIS METAPHOR TO HIMSELF,
JESUS AFFIRMS HIS MESSIANIC IDENTITY**

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him the glory! For the marriage of the Lamb has come” (Revelation 19:7).

- Jesus is intentionally shocking/confounding...
- Don't fast when it's time to feast...
- Don't feast when it's time to fast...

B. New LIGHT & FAITH

(ADEQUATE)

Then He spoke a parable to them: “No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth from a new garment on an old garment; or else the new piece makes a tear—**(schism)** for the **patch** (a.k.a. “fill up” or “take up” or “make complete”) pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. And also, **the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old.**

- The real focus and point of contrast is the old & the new... in fasting & in Christ.
- The metaphor teaches:

The inner condition of the
fabrics must be
congruent...

Jesus is The Patch!

Galatians 4:4: “*But when the fullness (patch) of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.*”

- **Colossians 1:19:** “*For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him.*”
- **Colossians 2:9:** “*For in Christ all the fullness of Deity dwells bodily.*”
- **John 1:16:** “*From His fullness we have all received grace upon grace.*”

***WE'RE BETTER OFF WRAPPED IN THE PATCH
THAN TO HAVE WARDROBE FULL OF THE
WORLD'S FINEST CLOTHING.***

THE Patch cannot be slapped on your old sinful self like a shiny new suit or beautiful dress...

He's NOT an add-on accessory!

“*If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me*” (Luke 9:23).

C. **New LIFE & FORCE**

(ATOMIC!)

“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into knew wineskins. New wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, ‘The old is better.’”

VIDEO: *Wineskins*
(Sam Whittaker)

III. Missional Message:

- a. Always BE Christ-centric in your prep, prayers, posture, perspective, & perseverance.
- b. See that Jesus & His Gospel are literally “The Answer” to ALL of life’s questions & challenges!
- c. The holistic message:
 - i. Compatibility & Congruency
 - ii. All Absolutely New & True
 - iii. Test for Transformation:
 1. **2 Corinthians 13:5**
 2. **2 Corinthians 5:17-21**

17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come... **20**Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. **21**For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

REVIEW:

1. Only miraculously NEW & true lovers have life...
2. Christ & Christianity do NOT add-on or cover up.
He miraculously transforms (by grace thru faith).
3. Neither The Holy Spirit, Christ, nor His Church can be contained in the God-less, hypocritical rigidity of legalism OR the unholy rot of theological liberalism.

CLOSE:

ONLY Messiah's **NEW** & true, miraculously transformed missionaries, can & will BE righteous... & redeemed!

PRAYER

WORSHIP: *Crown Him With Many Crowns*

Crown Him with many crowns,
The Lamb upon His throne;
Hark! how the heav'ly anthem drowns
All music but its own!
Awake, my soul, and sing
Of Him who died for thee,
And hail Him as thy matchless King
Through all eternity.

2

Crown Him the Virgin's Son,
The God Incarnate born,
Whose arm those crimson trophies won
Which now His brow adorn:
Fruit of the mystic Tree,
As of that Tree the Stem;
The Root whence flows Thy mercy free,
The Babe of Bethlehem.

3

Crown Him the Lord of Love:
Behold His hands and side;
Rich wounds yet visible above
In beauty glorified:
No angel in the sky
Can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends his burning eye
At mysteries so bright.

4

Crown Him the Lord of peace,
Whose power a scepter sways
From pole to pole, that wars may cease,
And all be prayer and praise.
His reign shall know no end,
And round His pierced feet
Fair flowers of glory now extend
Their fragrance ever sweet.

5

Crown Him the Lord of years,
The Potentate of time.
Creator of the rolling spheres,
Ineffably sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
For Thou hast died for me;
Thy praise shall never, never fail
Throughout eternity.

STUDY NOTES:

A 3-FACETED ANSWER FROM CHRIST

- Jesus begins by linking fasting with a wedding...
 - Jesus taught on fasting in His sermon...
 - Jesus here connects fasting with mourning...
 - Jesus knew weddings were 7 day feasts and NOT a time for fasting...
 - Bridegrooms are not normally taken away...
 - Jesus is intentionally shocking/confounding...
 - This is biblical & missional, prophetic clarity:
 - Jesus connects Himself to man's fasting
 - HE is the key & core of fasting...
 - See His self-declaration: "I AM LORD!"
 - "Bridegroom" is a Messianic title:
 - The Way, The Life, The Truth
 - The Alpha & The Omega
 - The Bread of Life
 - The Light of the world
 - The Good Shepherd
 - The Resurrection & Life
 - The Gate/Door for the sheep
 - The True Vine
 - See the connection to Psalm 22
 - See the connection to Isaiah 52-53
 - Bridegroom... "taken away from them"
 - Jesus is foretelling of His cross

- Jesus is foretelling of His death
- Jesus is foreshadowing His follower's short-term mourning

JEWISH WEDDING CUSTOMS EXPECTED A SEVEN-DAY FEAST; INTERRUPTION WOULD BE SCANDALOUS. JESUS' METAPHOR SHOCKS HIS LISTENERS

Jesus' self-identification as “the Bridegroom” draws upon Old Testament covenant imagery where the LORD is portrayed as Husband to His people ([Isaiah 54:5](#); [Hosea 2:19-20](#)).

**BY APPLYING THIS METAPHOR TO HIMSELF,
JESUS AFFIRMS HIS MESSIANIC IDENTITY**

Eschatological Hope

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him the glory! For the marriage of the Lamb has come” ([Revelation 19:7](#)).

The verb translated **“taken from”** conveys the decisive, even violent, removal of the Bridegroom—an event anticipated only here in the Gospels prior to Passion predictions that follow in clearer terms.

T/S: Next, Jesus links fasting to a garment metaphor...

D. LK **Then He spoke a parable to them:** MK “No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth LK from a new garment MK on an old garment; or else the new piece LK makes a tear— MT for the **patch** pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. LK And also **the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old.**

- Another peculiar reference is made by Christ...
- The surface visual is a garment and a patch... tied to fasting.
- The real focus and point of contrast is the old & the new... in fasting & in Christ.
- Context is the garment... the content is the condition of it.
- The metaphor teaches:
 - The inner condition of the fabrics must be congruent...
 - Ignoring the inner condition can be very detrimental...
 - Do NOT assume that what sounds/looks good is good...

- When the unshrunk patch begins to shrink (and it will), it will “tear away from the (already shrunk) garment.”
 - Sewing a new patch on an old garment to fix a tear will end badly.
 - We need to understand:
 - What does the garment represent?
 - What does the patch represent?
 - What does “shrunk” represent?
 - Unshrunk?
 - Shrunk?
 - What does “new” represent?
 - What does old represent?
 - What does all this have to do with fasting?
 - How does it all connect back to Christ?

“If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me” ([Luke 9:23](#)).

Here the verb links costly self-denial with sustained obedience.

Taking Away Sin and Condemnation

John's testimony reaches its pinnacle: "*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*" ([John 1:29](#)).

Theological Summary

Scripture employs this single verb to portray the lifting of burdens, the bearing of the cross, the removal of sin, the excision of evil, and the final overthrow of wickedness. From mats raised in Galilean villages to a stone hurled into apocalyptic seas, the word traces a redemptive arc: what humanity cannot carry, Christ bears; what humanity cannot discard, Christ removes; and what Christ removes, God remembers no more.

PATCH:

THAT WHICH FILLS... OR THE SUM TOTAL THAT MAKES SOMETHING COMPLETE.

Scripture applies the term to cloth, baskets, time, the created order, Israel and the Gentiles, the incarnate Christ, the Church, divine love, and apostolic blessing. Together the references reveal a single, coherent testimony:

God plans, provides, and perfects until His purposes stand complete.

The new patch and old garment are incompatible, picturing the incompatibility of the new covenant with old-covenant legalism.

- Galatians 4:4: ***“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.”***
- Ephesians 1:10 speaks of God’s purpose ***“to bring all things in heaven and on earth together in Christ”*** at ***“the fullness of the times.”***

The same God who scheduled the first advent has fixed the season when every realm will be harmonized under Christ's headship.

CHRIST IS THE PATCH!!!

Greek for tear is *schisma*

- Colossians 1:19: “*For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him.*”
- Colossians 2:9: “*For in Christ all the fullness of Deity dwells bodily.*”
- John 1:16: “*From His fullness we have all received grace upon grace.*”
- Ephesians 1:22–23: God “placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

The Church shares, manifests, and is sustained by Christ's own fullness.

- Ephesians 4:13 LOOKS TOWARD “THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST,” THE CORPORATE Maturity REACHED AS EVERY MEMBER CONTRIBUTES.

Ethical Fulfillment

Romans 13:10: “Love does no wrong to its neighbor. Therefore ***love is the fulfillment of the Law.***” Love is the moral πλήρωμα, completing what the Law aimed for by embodying its intent in relational righteousness.

Apostolic Ministry and Mission

Romans 15:29: PAUL EXPECTS TO COME TO ROME “***in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.***”

Gospel ministry is not a mere transmission of information but the conveyance of Christ's plenitude to the saints.

Theological Synthesis

1. Origin: Fullness belongs intrinsically to God.
2. Mediation: Fullness is incarnated in Christ alone.
3. Distribution: Fullness is experienced in the Church through the Spirit.
4. Consummation: Fullness will characterize the unified cosmos when God's timetable is complete.

V.17

E. MK "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. MT But they put new wine into knew wineskins. LK New wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. **And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.'**"

A 3-FACETED ANSWER FROM CHRIST

- Finally, Jesus connects fasting to the relationship between wine & wine skins.
 - Once again, the deeper message is connected to "new & old"

- Jesus uses the context of perceived “common sense”
- Jesus explains the consequence of ignoring common sense...
 - “The skins burst.”
 - “The wine is spilled.”
 - “The skins are destroyed.”
- Jesus explains the positive affects of adhering to His common sense instruction(s):
 - “New wine is put into fresh/new wineskins.”
 - Putting new wine in new wineskins “preserves” the wine.
 - Putting new wine in new wineskins “preserves” the skins.
- We need to understand what the wine represents...
- We need to understand what the wineskins represent...
- We need to understand how “new” & “old” are to be applied...
- We need to understand what “burst” and “spilled” mean...
- We need to understand what “preserved” means in both cases...

Missional Message:

- d. Assess your questioners before their questions...
- e. Always BE Christ-centric in your prep, prayers, posture, perspective, & perseverance.
- f. See that Jesus & His Gospel are literally “The Answer” to ALL of life’s questions & challenges – the big ones and the small ones... the honest ones and the deceptive ones... the helpful one and the hurtful ones...
- g. The holistic message:
 - i. Compatibility & Congruency
 - 1. Biblical truth
 - 2. Missional love
 - 3. Cultural hate
 - 4. Personal light
 - 5. Eternal life
 - ii. All Absolutely New
 - 1. Close is not/never close enough!
 - a. We’ve seen casual crowds...
 - b. We’ve seen fickle followers...
 - c. We’ve seen lukewarm part-timers...
 - d. We’ve seen deceptive hypocrites...
 - i. Consider the Scribes & Pharisees
 - ii. Consider Demas
 - iii. Consider the Rich Young Ruler
 - iv. Consider Prodigal’s older brother
 - v. Consider Judas & Satan
 - 2. 2 Corinthians 13:5

- a. Jesus continues to INVITE & INFORM
- b. Jesus continues to INSPECT & INSPIRE
- c. Jesus continues to IMPACT & IGNITE

3. Transformation [2 Corinthians 5:17-21](#)

17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

1. *New LOVE & FAMILY Relationships (Saved)*
2. *New LIFE & FIT Relationships (Sanctified)*
3. *New LIGHT & FAITH Relationships (Spirit-filled)*

18All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;

19that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

20Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

21For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

We don't fast when it's time to feast...
& we don't feast when we should fast!

We don't make mountains out of mole hills...
& we don't make mole hills out of mountains!

“will be taken away”

◀ 522. apairó ▶

Lexical Summary

apairó: To lift off, to remove, to take away

Original Word: ἀπαίρω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: apairó

Pronunciation: ä-pī'-rō

Phonetic Spelling: (ap-ah'-ee-ro)

KJV: take (away)

NASB: taken away

Word Origin: [from [G575 \(ἀπό - since\)](#) and [G142 \(ἀἴρω - take\)](#)]

1. to lift off, i.e. remove

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

take away.

From [apo](#) and [airo](#); to lift off, i.e. Remove -- take (away).

see GREEK [apo](#)

see GREEK [airo](#)

NAS Exhaustive Concordance

Word Origin

from [apo](#) and [airó](#)

Definition

to lift off

NASB Translation

taken away (3).

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

STRONGS NT 522: ἀπαίρω

ἀπαίρω: 1 aorist passive ἀπηρθην; **to lift off, take or carry away**; passive, ἀπό τίνος **to be taken away from anyone**: [Matthew 9:15](#); [Mark 2:20](#); [Luke 5:35](#). (In Greek writings from Herodotus down.)

Topical Lexicon

Occurrences in Scripture

Matthew 9:15, Mark 2:20, and Luke 5:35 form a tight Synoptic triad in which Jesus foretells that “the bridegroom will be taken from them” (Matthew 9:15).

The verb translated “taken from” conveys the decisive, even violent, removal of the Bridegroom—an event anticipated only here in the Gospels prior to Passion predictions that follow in clearer terms.

Contextual Setting: The Bridegroom Metaphor

Jesus’ self-identification as “the Bridegroom” draws upon Old Testament covenant imagery where the LORD is portrayed as Husband to His people (Isaiah 54:5; Hosea 2:19-20).

In the first-century Jewish wedding, the bridegroom’s presence initiates celebration; his sudden absence signals an unexpected breach. **BY APPLYING THIS METAPHOR TO HIMSELF, JESUS AFFIRMS HIS MESSIANIC IDENTITY AND INTRODUCES THE PARADOX OF REJOICING AND IMPENDING SORROW THAT FRAMES HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY.**

Theological Significance

1. Substitutionary Suffering: **The removal of the Bridegroom**

anticipates the cross. The temporary separation of Jesus from His disciples mirrors the atoning separation He experiences under divine judgment ([Matthew 27:46](#)).

2. Inaugurated Eschatology: **The Bridegroom's departure inaugurates the “already/not yet” tension of the Kingdom**—His presence in the Spirit ([John 14:18](#)) amid physical absence, and the promise of visible return ([Revelation 19:7](#)).

3. Covenantal Assurance: **Although removed, the Bridegroom remains bound to the bride (the Church) by covenant blood** ([Luke 22:20](#)).

The verb's finality intensifies the certainty of the removal, but the broader narrative guarantees reunion.

Fasting in Light of the Bridegroom's Absence

Jesus places fasting in a Christ-centered framework. When He is bodily present, fasting gives way to joy; when He is taken away, fasting becomes a gospel-shaped discipline marked by longing for His return. Early Christian practice followed this pattern, moving weekly fasts from Monday-Thursday (common Jewish practice) to Wednesday-Friday, commemorating betrayal and crucifixion.

Historical and Cultural Background

- **JEWISH WEDDING CUSTOMS EXPECTED A SEVEN-DAY FEAST; INTERRUPTION WOULD BE SCANDALOUS. JESUS' METAPHOR SHOCKS HIS LISTENERS, SUGGESTING A CATASTROPHE THAT RUPTURES NORMAL FESTIVITY.**

- Roman authorities often “took away” political threats; the wording hints at state action in Jesus’ arrest and execution.

- Rabbinic discussion associated the removal of a bridegroom with exile imagery, reinforcing the exile-restoration theme fulfilled in the Gospel.

Intercanonical Connections

- [Isaiah 62:5](#) connects Bridegroom joy with Zion's restoration, fulfilled partially in the Church and consummated in the New Jerusalem ([Revelation 21:2](#)).

• **Psalm 45 celebrates the royal bridegroom, echoed in Hebrews 1:8-9 as messianic.**

- The removal motif aligns with [Genesis 22](#) where Isaac (a type of Christ) is nearly "taken" yet ultimately spared—heightening the contrast with the true Lamb who is not spared.

Patristic and Early Church Witness

- Irenaeus cited the Bridegroom's removal to defend a literal passion against early docetism.
- Tertullian argued that post-ascension fasting honors the words of the Lord in these passages.

• [**Augustine interpreted**](#) the verb's aorist passive form as proof of divine sovereignty: Christ allows Himself to be taken for the bride's redemption.

Ministry Application

1. Worship: **Celebration is appropriate because the Bridegroom lives; lament is fitting because the Church still awaits consummation.**
2. Spiritual Disciplines: Fasting, prayer, and communion become acts of bridal yearning rather than mere asceticism.
3. Pastoral Care: Believers enduring loss or persecution find solidarity with the disciples who faced the Bridegroom's absence yet later experienced resurrection joy.

Eschatological Hope

While the verb denotes a completed act, Scripture promises the Bridegroom's definitive return:

***“Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him the glory! For the marriage of the Lamb has come”* ([Revelation 19:7](#)).**

The temporary removal heightens anticipation for eternal union, ensuring that every fast gives way to the wedding supper of the Lamb.

“tears away”

◀ 142. airó ▶

Lexical Summary

airó: To lift, to take up, to raise, to remove, to carry away.

Original Word: αἴρω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: airó

Pronunciation: ah'-ee-ro

Phonetic Spelling: (ah'-ee-ro)

KJV: away with, bear (up), carry, lift up, loose, make to doubt, put away, remove, take (away, up)

NASB: take, taken away, picked, pick, takes away, away, take away

Word Origin: [a primary root]

- 1. to lift up**
- 2. (by implication) to take up or away**
- 3. (figuratively) to raise (the voice), keep in suspense (the mind)**
- 4. (specially) to sail away (i.e. weigh anchor)**
- 5. (by Hebraism) to atone for sin**

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

to take up, take away

A primary root; to lift up; by implication, to take up or away; figuratively, to raise (the voice), keep in suspense (the mind), specially, to sail away (i.e. Weigh anchor); by Hebraism (compare [nasa'](#)) to expiate sin -- away with, bear (up), carry, lift up, loose, make to doubt, put away, remove, take (away, up).

see HEBREW [nasa'](#)

NAS Exhaustive Concordance

Word Origin

a prim. verb

Definition

to raise, take up, lift

NASB Translation

away (5), bear (4), carried (1), carry (1), get (4), hoisted (1), keep (1), lifted (2), pick (9), picked (11), pulls away (2), put away (1), raised (2), remove (1), removed (3), suspense* (1), take (13), take away (5), take...away (4), taken (3), taken...away (1), taken away (12), takes away (7), taking (1), took (2), took...away (1), took away (3), weighed anchor (1).

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

STRONGS NT 142: αἴρω

αἴρω (contracted from the poetic αείρω); future ἀρώ 1 aorist ἤρα, infinitive ἀραι, impv ἀρον; perfect ἤρκα ([Colossians 2:14](#)); passive, (present αἴρομαι); perfect ἤρματι ([John 20:1](#)); 1 aorist ἤρθην; (on the rejection of the iota subscript in these tenses see Alexander Buttmann (1873) Ausf. Spr. i., pp. 413, 439; (Winer's Grammar, 47 (46))); 1 future ἀρθήσομαι; (from Homer down); in the Sept. generally equivalent to ξύπνει; **to lift up, raise.**

1. to raise up;

a. to raise from the ground, take up: stones, [John 8:59](#); serpents, [Mark 16:18](#); a dead body, [Acts 20:9](#).

b. to raise upward, elevate, lift up: the hand, [Revelation 10:5](#); the eyes, [John 11:41](#); the voice, i. e., speak in a loud tone, cry out, [Luke 17:13](#); [Acts 4:24](#) (also in secular writings); τήν ψυχήν, to raise the mind, equivalent to excite, affect strongly (with a sense of fear, hope, joy, grief, etc.); in [John 10:24](#) to hold the mind in suspense between doubt and hope, cf. Lucke (or Meyer) at the passage,

c. to draw up: a fish, [Matthew 17:27](#) (ἀνασπάν, [Habakkuk 1:15](#)); σκάφην, [Acts 27:17](#); anchors from the bottom of the sea, [Acts 27:13](#), where supply τάς ἀγκύρας; cf. Kuinoel at the passage; (Winers Grammar, 594 (552); Buttmann, 146 (127)).

2. to take upon oneself and carry what has been raised, to

bear: τινα ἐπί χειρῶν, [Matthew 4:6](#); [Luke 4:11](#) ([Psalm 90:12](#)()); a sick man, [Mark 2:3](#); ζυγόν, [Matthew 11:29](#) ([Lamentations 3:27](#)); a bed, [Matthew 9:6](#); [Mark 2:9, 11](#); [Luke 5:24](#); [John 5:8-12](#); τόν σταυρόν, Matt. (Lachmann marginal reading); ; [Luke 9:28](#); [Mark 8:34](#); [Mark 10:21](#) (in R L brackets); [Mark 15:21](#); (**λίθον**) [Revelation 18:21](#); **to carry with**

one, (A. V. take): [Mark 6:8](#); [Luke 9:3](#); [Luke 22:36](#). Both of these ideas are expressed in classical Greek by the middle **αἴρεσθαι**.

3. to bear away what has been raised, carry off;

a. to move from its place: [Matthew 21:21](#); [Mark 11:23](#) (**ἀρθητι** be thou taken up, removed (Buttmann, 52 (45)), namely, from thy place); [Matthew 22:13](#) (Rec.); [John 2:16](#); [John 11:39](#), [41](#); [John 20:1](#).

b. to take off or away what is attached to anything: [John 19:31, 38f](#); to tear away, [Matthew 9:16](#); [Mark 2:21](#); to rend away, cut off, [John 15:2](#).

c. to remove: [1 Corinthians 5:2](#) (cast out from the church, where **ἀρθῆ** should be read for Rec. **ἐξαρθῆ**); tropically: faults, [Ephesians 4:31](#); **τὴν ἀμαρτίαν**, [John 1:29](#) (36 Lachmann in brackets), to remove the guilt and punishment of sin by expiation, or to cause that sin be neither imputed nor punished (**αἴρειν ἀμάρτημα**, [1 Samuel 15:25](#); **ἀνόμημα**, [1 Samuel 25:28](#), i. e. to grant pardon for an offence); but in [1 John 3:5](#) **τάς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν αἴρειν** is to cause our sins to cease, i. e., that we no longer sin, while we enter into fellowship with Christ, who is free from sin, and abide in that fellowship, cf. [1 John 3:6](#).

d. to carry off; carry away with one: [Matthew 14:12, 20](#); [Matthew 15:37](#); [Matthew 20:14](#); [Matthew 24:17](#); [Mark 6:29, 43](#); [Mark 8:8, 19](#); [Mark 13:15](#); [Luke 9:17](#); [Luke 17:31](#); [John 20:2, 13, 15](#); [Acts 20:9](#).

e. to appropriate what is taken: [Luke 19:21](#); [Mark 15:24](#).

f. to take away from another what is his or what is committed to him, **to take by force:** [Luke 6:30](#); [Luke 11:52](#); **τί ἀπό** with the genitive of person, [Matthew 13:12](#); [Matthew 21:43](#); [Matthew 25:28](#); [Luke 8:12, 18](#); [Luke 19:24, 26](#); ([Matthew 25:29](#)); [Mark 4:\(\);](#); [John 10:18](#); [John 16:22](#); perhaps also with the mere genitive of the person from whom anything is taken, [Luke 6:29](#); [Luke 11:22](#); [John 11:48](#), unless one prefer to regard these as possessive genitive,

g. to take and apply to any use: [Acts 21:11](#); [1 Corinthians 6:15](#).

h. to take from among the living, either by a natural death, [John 17:15](#) (**ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου** take away from contact with the world), or by violence, [Matthew 24:39](#); [Luke 23:18](#); [John 19:15](#); [Acts 21:36](#); with the addition of **ἀπό τῆς γῆς**, [Acts 22:22](#); **αἴρεται ἀπό τῆς γῆς ἡ ζῶν αὐτοῦ**, of a bloody death inflicted upon one, [Acts 8:33](#) ([Isaiah 53:8](#)).

i. of things; **to take out of the way, destroy:** χειρόγραφον, [Colossians 2:14](#); **cause to cease:** τήν κρίσιν, [Acts 8:33](#) ([Isaiah 53:8](#)).
(Compare: ἀπαίρω, ἔξαίρω, ἐπαίρω, μεταίρω, συναίρω, ὑπεραίρω.)

Topical Lexicon

Range of Usage in Scripture

The verb appears 101 times in the Greek New Testament, expressing two main actions: lifting or carrying something upward, and removing or taking something away.

CONTEXT DETERMINES WHETHER THE SENSE IS POSITIVE (RAISING, BEARING) OR NEGATIVE (ELIMINATING, DISPOSING). THE WORD'S FLEXIBILITY ALLOWS WRITERS TO MOVE EFFORTLESSLY FROM THE PHYSICAL TO THE SPIRITUAL, FROM A LITERAL ACT OF HOISTING A NET TO THE REDEMPTIVE REMOVAL OF SIN.

Lifted Objects and Burdens

Many occurrences describe ordinary objects being **picked up—mats ([Matthew 9:6](#)), baskets of leftovers ([Matthew 14:20](#)), stones ([John 8:59](#)), even serpents without harm ([Mark 16:18](#)).** Such scenes underline the earthy realism of the Gospels and Acts; people actually carried things, and the Spirit-inspired writers chose this everyday verb to narrate those tasks. **Yet the routine soon becomes theological: the same word portrays Simon of Cyrene “carrying His cross” ([Mark 15:21](#)), binding the mundane labor of a passer-by to the cosmic purpose of redemption.**

Miraculous Healings and Evidential Sign-Acts

When Jesus heals paralytics He commands, “Get up, pick up your mat, and go home” ([Matthew 9:6](#); [Mark 2:11](#); [John 5:8](#)).

The lifted mat gives visible proof that the hidden miracle has indeed occurred.

Luke records that onlookers were “filled with awe and glorified God” ([Luke 5:25](#)).

The verb therefore functions as a narrative hinge: what was formerly immovable is now carried away, demonstrating Messiah’s authority over both sickness and sin.

The Discipleship Call to Bear the Cross

Jesus issues a solemn invitation: *“If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me”* ([Luke 9:23](#)).

Here the verb links costly self-denial with sustained obedience.

The call repeats in [Matthew 16:24](#) and [Mark 8:34](#), emphasizing that discipleship is not a one-time decision but a lifelong bearing of Christ’s reproach.

Taking Away Sin and Condemnation

John’s testimony reaches its pinnacle: *“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* ([John 1:29](#)).

Later John affirms, “You know that He appeared to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin” ([1 John 3:5](#)). In both cases the verb encapsulates

the substitutionary work of Christ—He does not merely lift the burden, He removes it entirely. Paul echoes the theme: the record of debt “He took it away, nailing it to the cross” ([Colossians 2:14](#)).

Judicial and Eschatological Removal

Crowds in [Luke 23:18](#) and [Acts 22:22](#) scream, “*Away with him!*” demanding the removal of Jesus and later Paul. The same cry reappears in [Revelation 18:21](#) when a mighty angel “picked up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea,” picturing final judgment on Babylon. Thus **THE VERB CAN SIGNIFY DIVINE OR HUMAN EXPULSION, FORESHADOWING GOD’S ULTIMATE SEPARATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM EVIL.**

Spiritual Conflict and Victory

In the parable of the sower “the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts” ([Luke 8:12](#)). *Conversely, Christ declares, “No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord”* ([John 10:18](#)). The vocabulary of taking and not taking frames the cosmic struggle: Satan strives to snatch life-giving seed, but cannot seize the life of the Good Shepherd.

Ministerial Service and Practical Charity

Believers are exhorted to “carry” material needs: the disciples “took away” twelve baskets of fragments ([Mark 6:43](#)); the servants at Cana “filled them to the brim” then “drew some out” (verb implied, [John 2:8](#)). Deacons in [Acts 6](#) will later “take care” of food distribution, continuing the pattern that ministry often begins with the humble removal or transport of tangible goods.

The Pattern of Apostolic Suffering and Deliverance

When an enraged mob drags Paul from the temple, soldiers “carried him” to safety ([Acts 21:35](#)). Eutychus is “picked up dead” but restored to life ([Acts 20:9-12](#)). The verb records both peril and

preservation, reminding readers that servants of Christ may be removed from danger yet never from divine purpose.

Pastoral and Ethical Exhortations

Paul warns the Corinthians that unrepentant immorality must “be removed from your midst”.
(1 Corinthians 5:2).

By the same token, believers are told, ***“Let all bitterness and wrath ... be taken away from you”*** ([Ephesians 4:31](#)). Moral purity requires decisive action; sin and rancor must be lifted out of the community as surely as leaven from dough.

Theological Summary

Scripture employs this single verb to portray the lifting of burdens, the bearing of the cross, the removal of sin, the excision of evil, and the final overthrow of wickedness. From mats raised in Galilean villages to a stone hurled into apocalyptic seas, the word traces a redemptive arc: what humanity cannot carry, Christ

bears; what humanity cannot
discard, Christ removes; and what
Christ removes, God remembers
no more.

“patch”

4138. pléróma ►

Lexical Summary

pléróma: Fullness, completion, that which fills

Original Word: πλήρωμα

Part of Speech: Noun, Neuter

Transliteration: pléróma

Pronunciation: play'-ro-mah

Phonetic Spelling: (play'-ro-mah)

KJV: which is put in to fill up, piece that filled up, fulfilling, full, fulness

NASB: fullness, fulfillment, full

Word Origin: [from [G4137 \(πληρόω - fulfill\)](#)]

1. repletion or completion
2. (subjectively) what fills (as contents, supplement, copiousness, multitude)
3. (objectively) what is filled (as container, performance, period)

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

fullness, fulfilling, full,

From [pleroo](#); repletion or completion, i.e. (subjectively) **what fills (as contents, supplement, copiousness, multitude)**, or (objectively) what is filled (as

container, performance, period) -- which is put in to fill up, piece that filled up, fulfilling, full, fulness.

see GREEK [pleroo](#)

HELPS Word-studies

Cognate: 4138 *plérōma* – "sum **total, fulness, even (super) abundance**" (BAGD). [See 4130 \(plēthō\).](#)

NAS Exhaustive Concordance

Word Origin

from [plérō](#)

Definition

fullness, a filling up

NASB Translation

all...contains (1), fulfillment (2), full (2), fullness (10), patch (2).

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

STRONGS NT 4138: πλήρωμα

πλήρωμα, πληρώματος, τό (πληρόω), the Sept. for נֶּלֶג;

1. etymologically it has a passive sense, **that which is (or has been) filled**; very rarely so in classical Greek: **a ship**, inasmuch as it is filled (i. e. manned) with sailors, rowers, and soldiers; ἀπό δύο πληρωματων Ἐμάχοντο, Lucian, ver. hist. 2, 37; πέντε εἶχον πληρώματα, ibid. 38. In the N. T. the body of believers, as that which is filled with the presence, power, agency, riches of God and of Christ: τοῦ Χριστοῦ, [Ephesians 4:13](#) (see [ἥλικία](#), 1 c. (cf. Winers Grammar, § 30, 3 N. T; Buttmann, 155 (136)); ; εἰς πᾶν τό πλήρωμα τοῦ Θεοῦ, that ye may become a body wholly filled and flooded by God, [Ephesians 3:19](#) (but WH marginal reading reads πληρωθῆ πᾶν τό

2. **that which fills or with which a thing is filled**: so very frequently in classical Greek from Herodotus down; especially of those things with which ships are filled, freight and merchandise, sailors, oarsmen, soldiers (cf. our 'complement' (yet cf. Lightfoot as below, p. 258f)) (of the animals filling Noah's ark, Philo de vit. Moys. ii. § 12); πλήρωμα πόλεως, the inhabitants or population filling a city, Plato, de rep. 2, p. 371 e.; Aristotle, polit. 3, 13, p. 1284{a}, 5; 4,4, p. 1291a, 17; others. So in the N. T. ἡ γῆ καὶ τό πλήρωμα αὐτῆς, whatever fills the earth or is contained in it, [1 Corinthians 10:26, 28](#) Rec. ([Psalm 23:1](#) 0; 0; [Jeremiah 8:16](#); [Ezekiel 12:19](#), etc.; τό πλήρωμα τῆς θαλάσσης, [Psalm 95:11](#) 0; [1 Chronicles 16:32](#)); κοφίνων πληρώματα, those things with which the baskets

were filled, (**basketfuls**), [Mark 6:43](#) T Tr WH (on this passive, cf. Lightfoot as below, p. 260); also **σπυρίδων πληρώματα**, [Mark 8:20](#); **the filling** (Latincomplementum) by which a gap is filled up, [Matthew 9:16](#); [Mark 2:21](#); **that by which a loss is repaired**, spoken of the reception of all the Jews into the kingdom of God (see **ἵττημα**, 1), [Romans 11:12](#). Of time (see **πληρόω**, 2 b. **α.**), that portion of time by which a longer antecedent period is completed; hence, **completeness, fullness**, of time: **τοῦ χρόνου**, [Galatians 4:4](#); **τῶν καιρῶν**, [Ephesians 1:10](#) (on which see **οἰκονομία**).

3. fullness, abundance: [John 1:16](#); [Colossians 1:19](#); [Colossians 2:9](#); **full number,** [Romans 11:25](#).

4. equivalent to **πλήρωσις** (see **καύχημα**, 2), i. e. a **fulfilling, keeping:** **τοῦ νόμου** (see **πληρόω**, 2 c. **α.**), [Romans 13:10](#). For a full discussion of this word see Fritzsche, Ep. ad Romans, ii., p. 469ff; (especially Lightfoot's Commentary on Colossians, p. 257ff).

Topical Lexicon

Definition and Scope

πλήρωμα denotes **THAT WHICH FILLS, THE STATE OF BEING FILLED, OR THE SUM TOTAL THAT MAKES SOMETHING COMPLETE.**

Scripture applies the term to cloth, baskets, time, the created order, Israel and the Gentiles, the incarnate Christ, the Church, divine love, and apostolic blessing. Together the references reveal a single, coherent testimony:

God plans, provides, and perfects until His purposes stand complete.

Concrete Illustrations of Abundance

- [Matthew 9:16](#) and [Mark 2:21](#) use *πληρώμα* for the “patch” that fills a tear.

The new patch and old garment are incompatible, picturing the incompatibility of the new covenant with old-covenant legalism.

- [Mark 6:43](#); 8:20 record twelve and seven “full baskets” (*πληρώματα*) of leftovers after the miraculous feedings. The term stresses super-abundance; Jesus supplies more than enough for all who come to Him.
- [1 Corinthians 10:26, 28](#) quote [Psalm 24:1](#): “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.” All created resources already belong to God, legitimizing Christian freedom to eat marketplace food while also guarding the weaker conscience.

Fullness in Redemptive History

- [Galatians 4:4](#): **“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.”** History reached its God-appointed climax in the incarnation.
- [Ephesians 1:10](#) speaks of God’s purpose **“to bring all things in heaven and on earth together in Christ”** at **“the fullness of the times.”**

The same God who scheduled the first advent has fixed the season when every realm will be harmonized under Christ’s headship.

- Romans 11:12, 25 contrasts Israel's present "failure" with the future "fullness" of both Israel and the nations. Neither group will be complete until the other is gathered in; God's covenant faithfulness guarantees the consummation.

Christological Fullness

- Colossians 1:19: "*For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him.*"
- Colossians 2:9: "*For in Christ all the fullness of Deity dwells bodily.*"
- John 1:16: "*From His fullness we have all received grace upon grace.*"

Jesus is not merely filled by God; He embodies the complete divine nature permanently. Out of that inexhaustible plenitude He continually supplies grace to believers.

Ecclesiological Fullness

- Ephesians 1:22–23: God "placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

The Church shares, manifests, and is sustained by Christ's own fullness.

- Ephesians 4:13 LOOKS TOWARD “THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST,” THE CORPORATE Maturity REACHED AS EVERY MEMBER CONTRIBUTES.
- Ephesians 3:19 *prays that believers “may be filled with all the fullness of God,”* rooting spiritual growth in communion with the triune God who indwells His people.

Ethical Fulfillment

Romans 13:10: “Love does no wrong to its neighbor. Therefore ***love is the fulfillment of the Law.***” Love is the moral πλήρωμα, completing what the Law aimed for by embodying its intent in relational righteousness.

Apostolic Ministry and Mission

Romans 15:29: PAUL EXPECTS TO COME TO ROME “***in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.***”

Gospel ministry is not a mere transmission of information but the conveyance of Christ's plenitude to the saints.

Theological Synthesis

1. **Origin:** Fullness belongs intrinsically to God.
2. **Mediation:** Fullness is incarnated in Christ alone.
3. **Distribution:** Fullness is experienced in the Church through the Spirit.
4. **Consummation:** Fullness will characterize the unified cosmos when God's timetable is complete.

Pastoral Implications

- Assurance: Since Christ contains all divine fullness, believers lack nothing necessary for life and godliness.
- Maturity: The Church should labor toward collective completeness, refusing spiritual stagnation.
- Mission: The promised fullness of the Gentiles and Israel urges ongoing evangelism and intercession for both.
- Hope: History is not random; it moves toward a divinely appointed fullness when Christ will be “all in all.”

Summary

Strong's 4138 weaves through Scripture as a golden thread of completion—material, temporal, redemptive, and personal—culminating in Christ and flowing into His people until creation itself is filled with the glory of God.

Expositor's Bible Commentary: D.A. Carson

Fasting and the dawning of the messianic joy (9:14–17)

14 Mark (Mk 2:18–22; cf. Luke 5:33–39) says that both the Pharisees and the disciples of John were fasting—probably on one of the regularly observed but voluntary fast days (see on 4:2; 6:16–18)—and that “*some people*” asked this question. Luke makes it the Pharisees, Matthew the disciples of John. On the face of it (see Luke), the setting is the same as for the previous pericope, and regarding fasting the disciples of John are in accord with the Pharisees.

**THE BAPTIST HIMSELF SHOWED A NOBLE FREEDOM
FROM JEALOUSY WHEN JESUS' MINISTRY BEGAN
TO SUPERSEDE HIS OWN (CF. ESP. JOHN 3:26–31).
BUT SOME OF JOHN'S DISCIPLES FELT
DIFFERENTLY NOW THAT HE WAS IN PRISON
(MT 4:12);**

and because they kept up their leader's asceticism (11:18), not heeding his strong witness to Jesus, they saw an occasion for criticism.

Most modern commentators believe that here Matthew is referring to the Baptist's followers who never accepted Jesus' supremacy and who by the end of the first century had developed their own sect.

Doubtless Matthew would have cheerfully applied Jesus' response to them also. But there is no reason to deny that this incident happened during Jesus' ministry. Moreover, after the bridegroom was taken away (v. 15), Jesus' disciples often fasted (e.g., Acts 13:3; 14:23; 27:9), making it less likely that these Baptist sectarians would have leveled their charge after the Passion and Resurrection than before it. Just as the "questioners" (accusers?) had approached Jesus' disciples about his conduct (v. 11), so now questioners approached Jesus about his disciples' conduct.

15 For his response Jesus used three illustrations (Luke 5:39 adds a fourth), all given in the same order by the Synoptics.

There seems little to be gained by supposing that the sayings were at one time separate.

**THE FIRST ILLUSTRATION ABOUT THE "GUESTS OF THE BRIDEGROOM" (lit., "the sons of the bride chamber"; see on 5:9; 8:12)
PICKS UP A METAPHOR FROM THE BAPTIST, WHO SAW HIMSELF AS THE "BEST MAN" AND JESUS AS THE GROOM (JOHN 3:29).**

This similar metaphor would therefore be the more effective to this audience—Jesus is the groom and the disciples his "guests" who are

so overjoyed at being with him that for them to fast is inappropriate.

In exonerating his disciples' eating, Jesus used messianic-eschatological terms.

In the OT the bridegroom metaphor was repeatedly applied to God (Isa 54:5–6; 62:4–5; Hos 2:16–20); and Jews sometimes used it of marriage in connection with Messiah's coming or with the messianic banquet (cf. SBK, 1:500–518; and in the NT, cf. Matt 22:2; 25:1; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:23–32; Rev 19:7, 9; 21:2).

Thus...

Jesus' answer was implicitly Christological: he himself is the messianic bridegroom, and the Messianic Age has dawned.

The objection is often made that the second part of Jesus' answer, regarding the disciples' mourning once the groom is taken (*aparthē*, "taken," may bear overtones of Isa 53:8 LXX) from them, is not authentic on two chief grounds.

1. Such an obvious reference to the Passion (and Ascension?) comes too early in Jesus' ministry. Some try to avoid this objection by supposing that Jesus was saying no more than that he like other men must die sometime. Neither the objection nor its proposed solution is relevant to one who has already revealed so formidable a messianic self-consciousness.

2. Matthew has allegorized the original parable—a sign of late accretion or adaptation. Yet this simplistic view of “parable” will not withstand scrutiny (cf. further on 13:3a). Above all the language is so cryptic that it is doubtful whether even Jesus’ disciples grasped the messianic implications of these words till the early weeks of the postresurrection church.

16–17

Luke 5:36 labels these illustrations “parables.” In general terms the first of this pair is clear enough: **a piece of unshrunk cloth tightly sewed to old and well-shrunk cloth in order to repair a tear will cause a bigger tear (9:16).** Admittedly the grammar is difficult (cf. Notes).

The second (v. 17) is also a “slice of life” in the ancient world. Skin bottles for carrying various fluids were made by killing the chosen animal, cutting off its head and feet, skinning the carcass, and sewing up the skin, fur side out, to seal off all orifices but one (usually the neck). The skin was tanned with special care to minimize disagreeable taste. **In time the skin became hard and brittle.** If new wine, still fermenting, were put into such an old skin, the buildup of fermenting gases would split the brittle container and ruin both bottle and wine. New wine was placed only in new wineskins still pliable and elastic enough to accommodate the pressure.

*These illustrations show
that the new situation
introduced by Jesus could
not simply be patched onto*

old Judaism or poured into the old wineskins of Judaism.

New forms would have to accompany the kingdom Jesus was now inaugurating;

to try to domesticate him and incorporate him into the matrix of established Jewish religion would only succeed in ruining both Judaism and Jesus' teaching.

Two extreme interpretations must be avoided.

1. Some, noticing that the words "and both are preserved" (v. 17) are found only in Matthew, conclude that this first Gospel, unlike Mark, envisages the renewal and preservation of Judaism, not its abolition. This will not do: **the "both" that are preserved refers to the new wine and the new wineskins, not the old wineskins.** Jesus' teaching and the kingdom now dawning must be poured into new forms. **Matthew makes it at least as clear as does Mark that the new wine can only be preserved in new forms. Is it any surprise that Matthew includes explicit mention of the church (16:18; 18:17)?**

2. Dispensationalists are inclined to make this wine so new that there is no connection whatever with what has come before. Walvoord (p. 70) cites Ironside: "He had not come to add something to the legal dispensation but to supersede it with that which was entirely new.... The new wine of grace was not to be poured into the skin-bottles of legality." So sharp an antithesis is suspect on three grounds: (1) the grace-legality disjunction is greatly exaggerated; (2) it is not very obviously a set of Matthean categories; and (3) Matthew, as we have seen, repeatedly connects the OT with his own message in terms of prophecy and fulfillment.

The two parables of vv. 16–17 are frequently said to be independent sayings tacked on here, since they go beyond the question of fasting. That may be, but all three synoptists put them in the same place. Moreover **they go beyond the question of fasting only to lay the groundwork for the coherence of Jesus' answer about fasting. The newness Jesus brings cannot be reduced to or contained by traditions of Jewish piety.**

THE MESSIANIC BRIDEGROOM HAS COME. THESE PARABLES BRING UNAVOIDABLE AND RADICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ENTIRE STRUCTURE OF JEWISH RELIGION AS ITS LEADERS THEN CONCEIVED

IT. Scholars who understand the first Gospel to reflect a Jewish Christian community that preserves all the old forms of piety not only misinterpret 5:17–20 but do not adequately weigh this pericope.

Notes

16 The verb αἴρει (*airei*, “takes,” “draws,” or “pulls”) is consistently transitive in the active voice (BAGD, s.v.), and therefore τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτοῦ (*to plérōma autou* lit., “its full ness”; NIV, “patch”) must be construed as the direct object, perhaps referring to the overlapping section of the patch. See the rendering of Michael G. Steinhauser (“The Patch of Unshrunk Cloth [Mt 9¹⁶],” *ExpT* 87 [1975–76]: 312f.): “No one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth to an old cloak, because the patch of unshrunk cloth draws the overlapping section of the unshrunk cloth from the cloak and the tear becomes worse.”¹

Barnes Bible Commentary:

¹ D. A. Carson, [“Matthew,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 226–228.

14-17. *Then came the disciples of John, &c.*

This narrative is found also in Mar. 2:18-22; Lu. 5:33-39.

The reference here is to John the Baptist. It is probable that they had understood that John was the forerunner of the Messiah; and if such was the case, they could not account for the fact that there was such a difference between them and the disciples of Jesus.

The Pharisees fasted often—regularly twice a week, besides the great national days of fasting, Lu. 18:12. See Notes on Mat. 6:16-18. This was the established custom of the land, and John did not feel himself authorized to make so great a change as to dispense with it. They were desirous of knowing, therefore, why Jesus had done it.

Besides, it is probable that this question was put to Jesus when John was in prison, and his disciples, involved in deep grief on account of it, observed days of fasting. Fasting was the natural expression of sorrow, and they wondered that the followers of Jesus did not join with them in lamenting the captivity of him who was the forerunner and baptizer of their Lord.

Christ, in reply to them, used

three illustrations

all of them going to establish the same thing—

THAT WE SHOULD OBSERVE A FITNESS AND PROPRIETY IN THINGS.

The first is taken from a marriage. The children of the bride-chamber—that is, the bridemen, or *men who had the special care of the bridal chamber, and who were therefore his special friends*—do not think of fasting while he is with them. With them it is a time of festivity and rejoicing, and **mourning would not be appropriate**. When he is removed or taken away, then their festivity will be ended, and *then* will be the proper time for sorrow. So, says he, **John, your friend and teacher, is in captivity. With you it is a time of deep grief, and it is fit that you should fast. I am with my disciples. It is with them a time of joy**. It is not fit that they should use the tokens of grief, and fast now. When *I* am taken away, it will then be proper that they should fast. For an account of the ceremonies of an Eastern marriage, see Notes on Mat. 25:1–13.

16. *No man putteth a piece of new cloth, &c.* A second illustration was drawn from a well-known fact, showing also that there was *a propriety or fitness of things*. None of you, says he, in mending an old garment, would take a piece of entire new cloth. There would be a waste in it. An old piece, or a piece *like* the garment, would be better. The word here translated *new*, in the original means *rude, undressed, not fulled* by the cloth-dresser. In this state, if applied to an old garment, and if wet, it would *contract* and draw off a part of the garment to which it was attached, and thus make the rent worse than it was. So, says he, my new doctrines do not match with the old rites of the Pharisees. There is a fitness of things. Their doctrines require much fasting. In my system it would be incongruous; and if my new doctrines were to be attached to their old ones, it would only make the matter worse.

17. *Neither do men put new wine, &c.* The third illustration was taken from wine put into bottles. Bottles, in Eastern nations, were made, and are still made, of skins of beasts. Generally the skin was taken entire from a sheep or a goat, and, properly prepared, was filled with wine or water. Such bottles are still used, because, in crossing deserts of sand, they have no other conveyances but camels, or other beasts of burden. It would be difficult for them to carry glass bottles or kegs on them. They therefore fill two skins, and fasten them together and lay them

across the back of a camel, and thus carry wine or water to a great distance. These bottles were, of course, of different sizes, as the skins of kids, goats, or oxen might be used. Bruce describes particularly a bottle which he saw in Arabia, made in this manner of an ox-skin, which would hold 60 gallons, and two of which were a load for a camel. By long usage, however, bottles of skins became tender and would be easily ruptured. New wine put into them would ferment, and swell and burst them open. New skins or bottles would *yield* to the fermenting wine, and be strong enough to hold it from bursting. So, **says Christ, there is a, fitness or propriety of things. It is not fit that my doctrine should be attached to or connected with the old and corrupt doctrines of the Pharisees.** New things should be put together, and made to *match*.

This account of Eastern bottles may illustrate the following passages in the Bible: The Gibeonites took “wine-bottles, old, and rent, and bound up,” Jos. 9:4. “My belly is ready to burst, like new bottles,” Job 32:19. “I am become like a bottle in the smoke,” Ps. 119:83; *i.e.* like a bottle of skin hung up in a tent filled with smoke.²

MacArthur Bible Commentary:

THE ILLUSTRATIONS

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, “The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results. Nor do men put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out, and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.” (9:14–17)

² Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: Matthew & Mark*, ed. Robert Frew (London: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885), 100–101.

We do not know how long after Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees **the disciples of John came to Him**, but the logical relation of their question to that of the Pharisees is clear. Unlike that of the Pharisees, the question of John's disciples was sincere, but it reflected a similar concern about Jesus' teaching and activities that did not conform to the accepted religious standards.

Shortly after he baptized Jesus, **John** the Baptist in effect turned his disciples over to Jesus, saying, "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' ... He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:28, 30). Not all of **the disciples of John** began to follow Jesus, however, and even long after Pentecost the apostle Paul encountered some of them in Ephesus who knew no more of the faith than "John's baptism" (Acts 19:1–3).

John the Baptist was then in prison (see Matt. 4:12), and those of his **disciples** who had not begun to follow Jesus were left only with their traditional Jewish ceremonies and practices. Unlike the Pharisees outside Matthew's house, they **came to Him** (Jesus) directly, **saying**, "**Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?**" The Old Testament prescribed only one fast, the one on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (see Lev. 16:29, 31, where the phrase "humble your souls" [from the Heb. *'ānâ* "to afflict or humble"] commonly included the idea of refraining from food). But Jewish tradition had come to require fasting twice a week (see Luke 18:12), and these **disciples** were careful to follow that practice.

Along with alms giving and certain prescribed prayers, twice-weekly fasting was one of the three major expressions of orthodox Judaism during Jesus' day. The scribes and Pharisees looked on these practices with great seriousness and were careful not only to follow them faithfully but to do so as publicly and ostentatiously as possible—ostensibly as a testimony to true godliness but in reality as a testimony to their own self-styled piety. When they gave alms, they blew trumpets "in the synagogues and in the streets" in order to "be honored by men" (Matt. 6:2). When they prayed "in the synagogues and on the street corners," they did so "to be seen by men" (v. 5). And when they fasted, they "put on a gloomy face" and neglected their "appearance in order to be seen fasting by men" (v. 16). They did not see religion as a matter of humility, repentance, or forgiveness, but as a matter of ceremony and proud display. And therefore the external rituals which they paraded as badges of godly righteousness actually marked them as ungodly hypocrites, as Jesus declared in each of the three verses just cited (cf. 5:20).

Religious ritual and routine have always been dangers to true godliness. Many ceremonies, such as praying to saints and lighting a candle for a deceased relative are actually heretical. But even if it is not wrong in itself, when a *form* of praying, worshiping, or serving becomes the focus of attention, it becomes a barrier to true righteousness. It can keep an unbeliever from trusting in God and a believer from faithfully obeying Him. Even going to church, reading the Bible, saying grace at meals, and singing hymns can become lifeless routines in which true worship of God has no part.

Jesus first replied to John's disciples by saying, **The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.**

In those days a wedding would usually last seven days, and the **bridegroom** would choose his best friends as **attendants** to be responsible for the festivities. The wedding celebration was not a time for them to **mourn** but to rejoice. Jesus' point was that it was inappropriate for His followers to **mourn** and **fast** while He was with them in person. The insincere, superficial, and hypocritical fasting practiced by the Pharisees was, of course, always out of place. But even

sincere fasting was out of place as long as Jesus, the divine **bridegroom**, was still among His people. Their fasting was out of harmony with what God was then doing in their midst. There was no connection between their ritual and spiritual reality.

A fast is always meaningless if it is performed from habit and does not result from deep concern and mourning over some spiritual need. Going to church on Sunday is hypocritical if it is done apart from a genuine desire to worship and glorify God. Singing a hymn is only a pretense of worship if it does not come from a heart that seeks to praise the Lord.

The days will come, Jesus explained, **when the bridegroom is taken away**. **Taken away** is from *apairō*, which can carry the idea of sudden removal, of being snatched away violently. Jesus was obviously referring to His crucifixion, which would abruptly and violently take Him away from His followers, His faithful **attendants**. That will be the time for mourning, and **then they will fast**.

But for the present time, He was saying, fasting was inappropriate. When there is no reason to mourn there is no reason to fast. Fasting springs naturally from a broken and grieving heart, but fasting as a shallow spiritual ritual apart from such brokenness is an affront to God.

But an even more important issue was behind the question of John's disciples. Since they obviously had not become disciples of Jesus as John had instructed them to do, they had no basis for genuine faith. But it was clear to them, as it was to the Pharisees, that Jesus' teaching and activities were radically different from those of traditional Judaism. Consequently, behind their question about fasting may have been a deeper concern about forgiveness. "Why," they may really have been wondering, "do You emphasize internal things such as forgiveness, while our recognized religious leaders only emphasize external things such as fasting?"

Jesus' next two illustrations deal with that issue. He made clear that He was not teaching a reformed Pharisaism or a reformed rabbinicalism but an entirely different way of believing, thinking, and living. He did not come to improve the old system but to renounce and undermine it. His way had nothing to do with the old ways, and the old ways had no part in the new. The two ways cannot be connected to one another or be contained one in the other.

To illustrate the truth that His new way cannot be *connected* to the old way, Jesus went on to say, **No one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results**. Cloth of that day was primarily wool or linen, and both would shrink when washed. If a **patch of new, unshrunk, cloth** is sewn **on an old garment**, Jesus reminded them, then the first time the garment is washed, the new **patch** shrinks and **pulls away from the garment**, making a **worse tear** than before. In the same way, Jesus' new and internal gospel of forgiveness and cleansing cannot be attached to the old and external traditions of self-righteousness and ritual.

To illustrate the truth that His new way also cannot be *contained* in the old way, Jesus said, **Nor do men put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out, and the wineskins are ruined**.

Wine was often stored in animal skins that were specially prepared for that purpose. The hide would be uncut except at the legs and neck, and sometimes would be turned inside out. The leg openings would be stitched closed and sealed, and the neck was used as a spout, which was tied with a leather thong or string. **Old wineskins** would eventually dry out and become brittle, and if someone then **put new wine into** them, they would crack and **burst**, spilling **the wine ... out**. The only suitable container for **new wine** is a **fresh wineskin**. In the same way, the only life that can

contain true righteousness is the new life given by God when a person repents of his sin and trusts in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

The pharisaical, legalistic, external, self-righteous system of traditional Judaism could neither connect with nor contain the ministry and message of Christ. Consequently, that system had only one option—to oppose and seek to eliminate Christ, which is what it did.

It should be made clear that Jesus' doing away with the old and bringing in the new did not refer to setting aside the divine law and ushering in grace—as many interpreters have claimed throughout church history, and as some still claim today. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus categorically declared that He did *not* come to destroy the law but to fulfill it and that any opponent of the law was an opponent of God (Matt. 5:17–19). God's law and His grace have always coexisted and have always been perfectly compatible. The **old wineskins** were not the teachings of the Old Testament but the rabbinical traditions that had come to overshadow, supersede, and often contradict the divinely revealed truths of the Old Testament.

In this passage we can discover three marks of the true believer. First, like Matthew, the true believer follows the Lord. He leads a life of unquestioning obedience. Matthew made no conditions or excuses; he simply “rose, and followed Him” (v. 9). During a postresurrection appearance, Jesus said to Peter, “Follow Me!” But “Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; ... [and] therefore seeing him said to Jesus, ‘Lord, and what about this man?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!’” (John 21:19–22). The true believer is not always questioning God's truth and resisting His standards for living.

Second, the true believer has compassion on the unsaved. Like Matthew, he has a deep desire to lead others to Christ. That desire may sometimes get cluttered over with selfish concerns, but it will be there. Because we know “the fear of the Lord, we persuade men” to come to Him for salvation (2 Cor. 5:11); and if “the love of Christ controls us” (v. 14), that love will prompt us to witness of Him to others. Both our love of the unsaved and our love of Christ motivate us to be His instruments as He seeks and saves the lost (Luke 19:10). The indwelling Spirit of Christ gives compassion for the lost, and the person who has no desire to win the lost has no basis for claiming Christ or His Holy Spirit.

Third, a true believer forsakes legalism and ritualism. He fasts only as an expression of genuine spiritual concern, and he does not try to attach his new life in Christ to his old ritual or religion or try to fit it somehow into his old patterns. He knows they are incompatible and utterly contrary. He knows that what is begun in the Spirit cannot be completed in the flesh (Gal. 3:3). The genuine righteousness of a forgiven and cleansed heart cannot be enhanced or supplemented by external religious works. Freedom in Christ has no part in the bondage of legalism.

In a hymn that chronicles his own conversion, John Newton movingly describes the transforming power of Christ:

In evil long I took delight,
Unawed by shame or fear,
Till a new object struck my sight,
And stopped my wild career.
I saw One hanging on a tree,
In agony and blood;

He fixed His loving eyes on me,
As near His cross I stood.
How can it be, upon a tree
The Savior died for Me?
My soul is thrilled, my heart is filled,
To think He died for me.³

Tyndale New Testament Commentary:

The question about fasting (9:14–17)

14. After the hostile questioning by scribes (v. 3) and Pharisees (v. 11), a third group now appears in opposition to Jesus' practice, *the disciples of John*. Cf. 11:2; 14:12; Luke 11:1 for John's disciples, and Acts 18:25; 19:3 for the continued existence of such a community.

**John 3:25ff. and 4:1
suggest that they saw Jesus
and his disciples as rivals.**

For Jewish *fasting*, see on 6:16–18. John's disciples presumably joined the Pharisees in observing not only the one fast enjoined in the Old Testament law (the Day of Atonement) and other prescribed fasts of a commemorative nature, but a regular routine of weekly fasts.

³ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Matthew*, vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985–1989), 67–71.

The probable addition of *much* (RSV mg.) reinforces the point. Cf. 11:18 for John's own asceticism. **We have no evidence beyond 6:16–18 and this passage for Jesus' attitude to fasting, but v. 15 and 6:16–18 together with the continued use of fasting in Acts 13:2–3; 14:23 (for special purposes, not as a routine) show that he did not repudiate fasting as such, while this verse indicates that his practice was not rigorous.**

He presumably observed the Day of Atonement at least, but not the Pharisaic routine. Mark 2:18 suggests that the occasion here was a regular Pharisaic fast, but it is not clear whether the question related to Jesus' general practice or specifically to the meal of v. 10.

15. A *wedding* is a time of joy, not of asceticism. That Jesus saw his ministry in this light may reflect the idea of the Messianic banquet (see on 8:11), **ALREADY ANTICIPATED IN HIS TABLE-FELLOWSHIP WITH SINNERS (9:10).**

Cf. 25:1ff. for Jesus as the bridegroom, the one who is the centre and cause of the joy of his disciples.

John's disciples had lost their 'bridegroom', who was already in prison (4:12), so they had reason to mourn.

The same would be true one day for Jesus' disciples.

While the saying need mean no more than that Jesus will not always be present, *taken away* (**echoing Isa. 53:8**?) suggests a violent end, and the beginnings of official opposition in this chapter would give an early intimation of this eventual outcome.

Jesus and official Judaism were scarcely compatible, as vv. 16–17 will go on to indicate.

16–17. These verses do not relate directly to the situation of vv. 14–15 and were probably an independent saying, referring to Jewish tradition in general, not specifically to John's disciples. But they express **an important general truth of which the question of fasting was a specific example.**

Jesus has brought something new, and the rituals and traditions of official Judaism cannot contain it.

The explosive exuberance of the new era (for wedding, garment and wine as all symbols of eschatological salvation, see Jeremias, PJ, pp. 117–118) must break out of the confines of legalism and asceticism.

The Greek for tear is *schisma*,

which is also often used metaphorically; combining incompatible religious attitudes is a recipe for schism. What form the *fresh wineskins* will take is not spelt out, but they at least indicate that Jesus looked for some formal structure in religion, not for anarchy: ‘ “Free” thought that recognizes no authoritative control, is as useless as spilt wine’ (McNeile). *Both are preserved* is probably only the conclusion of the ‘story’ of the wineskins, not a deliberate prescription for the perpetuation of unreformed Judaism alongside the new life of the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew Henry’s Unabridged Commentary:

Matthew 9:14–17

The objections which were made against Christ and his disciples gave occasion to some of the most profitable of his discourses; thus are the interests of truth often served, even by the opposition it meets with from gainsayers, and thus the wisdom of Christ brings good out of evil.

This is the third instance of it in this chapter; his discourse of his power to forgive sin, and his readiness to receive sinners, was occasioned by the cavils of the scribes and Pharisees; so here, from a reflection upon the conduct of his family, arose a discourse concerning his tenderness for it. Observe,

I. The objection which the disciples of John made against Christ’s disciples, for not fasting so often as they did; which they are charged with, as another instance of the looseness of their profession, besides that of eating with publicans and sinners; and it is therefore suggested to them, that they should change that profession for another more strict. **It appears by the other evangelists (Mk. 2:18 and Lu. 5:33) that the disciples of the Pharisees joined with them, and we have reason to suspect that they instigated them, making use of John’s disciples as their spokesmen, because they, being more in favour with Christ and his disciples, could do it more plausibly.**

Note, **IT IS NO NEW THING FOR BAD MEN TO SET GOOD MEN TOGETHER BY THE EARS; IF THE PEOPLE OF GOD DIFFER IN THEIR SENTIMENTS, DESIGNING MEN WILL TAKE THAT OCCASION TO SOW DISCORD, AND TO INCENSE THEM ONE AGAINST ANOTHER, AND ALIENATE THEM ONE FROM ANOTHER, AND SO MAKE AN EASY PREY OF THEM.**

If the disciples of John and of Jesus clash, we have reason to suspect the Pharisees have been at work underhand, blowing the coals.

Now the complaint is...

*Why do we and the Pharisees fast often,
but thy disciples fast not?*

It is pity the duties of religion, which ought to be the confirmations of holy love, should be made the occasions of strife and contention; but they often are so, as here; where we may observe,

1. How **they boasted of their own fasting**. *We and the Pharisees fast often.* Fasting has in all ages of the church been consecrated, upon special occasions, to the service of religion; the Pharisees were much in it; **many of them kept two fast-days in a week, and yet the generality of them were hypocrites and bad men.**

Note,

False and formal professors often excel others in outward acts of devotion,

and even of mortification.

The disciples of John *fasted often*, partly in compliance with their master's practice, for he came *neither eating nor drinking* (ch. 11:18); and people are apt to imitate their leaders, though not always from the same inward principle; partly in compliance with their master's doctrine of repentance. Note, The severer part of religion is often most *minded* by those that are yet under the discipline of the Spirit, as a *Spirit of bondage*, whereas, though these are good in their place, we must pass through them to that life of delight in God and dependence on him, to which these should lead. Now they come to Christ to tell him that they *fasted often*, at least they thought it often. Note, *Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness*, Prov. 20:6. There is a proneness in professors to brag of their own performance in religion, especially if there by any thing extraordinary in them; nay, and not only to boast of them before men, but to plead them before God, and confide in them as a righteousness.

2. How they blamed Christ's disciples for not fasting so often as they did. *Thy disciples fast not.* They could not but know, that Christ had instructed his disciples to keep their fasts private, and to manage themselves so as that they might not appear unto men to fast; and, therefore, it was very uncharitable in them to conclude they did not fast, because they did not proclaim their fasts.

Note, **We must not judge of people's religion by that which falls under the eye and observation of the world.** But suppose it was so, that Christ's disciples did not *fast* so often or so long as they did, why truly, they would therefore have it thought, that they had more religion in them than Christ's disciples had. Note, **It is common for vain professors to make themselves a standard in religion, by which to try and measure persons and things, as if all who differed from them were so far in the wrong; as if all that did less than they, did too little, and all that did more than they, did too**

much, which is a plain evidence of their want of humility and charity.

3. How they brought this complaint to Christ. Note, If Christ's disciples, either by omission or commission, give offence, Christ himself will be sure to hear of it, and be reflected upon for it. *O, Jesus, are these thy Christians?* Therefore, as we tender the honour of Christ, we are concerned to conduct ourselves well.

Observe,

The quarrel with Christ was brought to the disciples (v. 11), the quarrel with the disciples was brought to Christ (v. 14), this is the way of sowing discord and killing love, to set people against ministers, ministers against people, and one friend against another.

II. The apology which Christ made for his disciples in this matter. Christ might have upbraided John's disciples with the former part of their question, *Why do ye fast often?* "Nay, you know best why you do it; but the truth is, many abound in external instances of devotion, that scarcely do themselves know why and wherefore." But he only vindicates the practice of his disciples; when they had nothing to say for themselves, he had something ready to say for them. Note, As it is wisdom's honour to be justified of all her children, so it is her children's happiness to be all justified of wisdom.

What we do according to the precept and pattern of Christ, he will be sure to bear us out in, and we may with confidence leave it to him to clear up our integrity.

But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.—Herbert

2 things Christ says in defence of their *not fasting*:

1. THAT IT WAS NOT A SEASON PROPER FOR THAT DUTY (v. 15):

Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? Observe, Christ's answer is so framed, as that it might sufficiently justify the practice of his own disciples, and yet not condemn the institution of John, or the practice of his disciples.

When the Pharisees fomented this dispute, they hoped Christ would cast blame, either on his own disciples, or on John's, but he did neither.

Note, When at any time we are unjustly censured, our care must be only to clear ourselves, not to recriminate, or throw dirt upon others; and such a variety may there be of circumstances, as may justify us in our practice, without condemning those that practise otherwise.

Now his argument is taken from the common usage of joy and rejoicing during the continuance of marriage solemnities; when all instances of melancholy and sorrow are looked upon as improper and absurd, as it was at Samson's wedding, Judges 14:17. Now, **(1.) The disciples of Christ were the children of the bride-chamber, invited to the wedding-feast, and welcome there; the disciples of the Pharisees were not so, but children of the bond-woman** (Gal. 4:25, 31), continuing under a dispensation of darkness and terror. Note, The faithful followers of Christ, who have the Spirit of adoption, have a continual feast, while they who have the spirit of bondage and fear, cannot rejoice for joy, as other people, Hos. 9:1. **(2.) The**

disciples of Christ had the bridegroom with them, which the disciples of John had not; their master was now cast into prison, and lay there in continual danger of his life, and therefore it was seasonable for them to fast often. Such a day would come upon the disciples of Christ, when the bridegroom should be taken from them, when they should be deprived of his bodily presence, and then should they fast. The

thoughts of parting grieved them when he was going, Jn. 16:6. Tribulation and affliction befell them when he was gone, and gave them occasion of *mourning* and *praying*, that is, of religious fasting. Note,

[1.] JESUS CHRIST IS THE BRIDEGROOM OF HIS CHURCH, AND HIS DISCIPLES ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE BRIDE-CHAMBER.

Christ speaks of himself to John's disciples under this similitude, because that John had used it, when he called himself a friend of the bridegroom,
John 3:29.

And if they would by this hint call to mind what their master then said, they would answer themselves.

[2.] The condition of those who are the children of the bride-chamber is liable to many changes and alterations in this world; they sing of mercy and judgment.

[3.] It is merry or melancholy with the children of the bride-chamber, according as they have more or less of the bridegroom's presence. When he is with them, the candle of God shines upon their head, and all is well; but when he is withdrawn, though but for a small moment, *they are troubled*, and walk heavily; the presence and nearness of the sun makes day and summer, his absence and distance, night and winter. **Christ is all in all to the church's joy.**

[4.] Every duty is to be done in its proper season. See Eccles. 7:14; Jam. 5:13. **There is a time to mourn and a time to laugh, to each of which we should accommodate ourselves, and bring forth fruit in due season.** In fasts, regard is to be had to the methods of God's grace towards us; when he *mourns to us*, we must *lament*; and also to the dispensations of his providence concerning us; there are times when *the Lord God calls to weeping and mourning*; regard is likewise to be had to any special work before us, ch. 17:21; Acts 13:2.

2. **THAT THEY HAD NOT STRENGTH
SUFFICIENT FOR THAT DUTY.**

This is set forth in two similitudes,

one of putting *new cloth into an old garment*, which does but pull the old to pieces (v. 16); the other of putting *new wine into old bottles*, which does but burst the bottles, v. 17.

Christ's disciples were not able to bear these severe exercises so well as those of John and of the Pharisees, which the learned Dr. Whitby gives this reason for: There were among the Jews not only sects of the Pharisees and Essenes, who led an austere life, but also *schools of the prophets*, who frequently lived in mountains and deserts, and were many of them Nazarites; they had also private academies to train men up in a strict discipline; and possibly from these many of John's disciples might come, and many of the Pharisees; whereas Christ's disciples, being taken immediately from their callings, had not been used to such religious austerities, and were unfit for them, and would by them be rather unfitted for their other work. Note, **(1.) Some duties of religion are harder and more difficult than others**, like *new cloth* and *new wine*, which require most intenseness of mind, and are most displeasing to flesh and blood; such are religious fasting and the duties that attend it. **(2.) The best of Christ's disciples pass through a state of infancy**; all the trees in Christ's garden are not of a growth, nor all his scholars in the same form; there are *babes in Christ* and grown men. **(3.) IN THE ENJOINING OF RELIGIOUS EXERCISES, THE WEAKNESS AND INFIRMITY OF YOUNG CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO BE CONSIDERED: AS THE FOOD PROVIDED FOR THEM MUST BE SUCH AS IS PROPER FOR THEIR AGE (1 Co. 3:2; HEB. 5:12), SO MUST THE WORK BE THAT IS CUT OUT FOR THEM.**

Christ would not speak to his disciples that which they could not then bear, Jn. 16:12. Young beginners in religion must not be put upon the hardest duties at first, lest they be discouraged.

Such as was God's care of his Israel, when he brought them out of Egypt, not to lead them by the way of the Philistines (Ex. 13:17, 18), and such as was Jacob's care of his children and cattle, not to overdrive them (Gen. 33:13), such is **Christ's care of the little ones of his family, and the lambs of his flock: he gently leads them.**

For want of this care, many times, *the bottles break, and the wine is spilled*; the profession of many miscarries and comes to nothing, through indiscretion at first.

Note,

There may be over-doing even in well-doing,
a being *righteous over-much*; and such an over-doing as may prove an *undoing* through the subtlety of Satan.