

"13 And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them. 14 As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He *said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him. 15 And it *happened that He was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 And hearing this, Jesus *said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." 18 John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they *came and *said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" 19 And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 "But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. 21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. 22 "No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.'" Mark 2:13-22, NAS95.

2:13-17 The call of Levi (see Mt. 9:9-13; Lk. 5:27-32). In our text there is another sign of the kingdom: Jesus has driven out demons and healed sick bodies, now he shows that he can heal sick souls as well. The story begins with Jesus teaching. Mark never gives as full an account of the content of this teaching as Luke or Matthew do; for him the good news of the kingdom of God was the heart of it. The affect of Jesus on Levi was not a matter of hypnotic power or magnetic personality, as possessed by some leaders of false cults today. It is just that Mark has reduced the story to the bare minimum, keeping only the essential points.

We miss the wonder of Levi's call if we do not remember all that 'tax collector' meant in those days. It meant all that 'loan-shark' means to us today, with the added idea of collaborator, for it usually involved working for the hated imperial power or the equally hated local dictator, Herod.

Matthew was probably a customs agent, charging import duties on wares brought through this town on important nearby trade routes. Even more than the fishermen, he has a secure and prosperous job, which he abandons to follow Jesus' call.

Some taxes went directly to the Roman government, but tolls and customs taxes

(usually levied at 2-3 percent, but multiplied for traders who passed through many territories) supported the cities where they were taken. Even if Levi is a locally valuable customs agent, however, this narrative shows that he is still regarded as unwholesome; the municipal aristocracy supported Roman interests against those of the Jewish poor.

2:15. Tax gatherers were regarded as collaborators with the Romans and despised by religious people. Some commentators have argued that “sinners” may refer specifically to those who did not eat food in ritual purity, but the term probably refers to anyone who lived sinfully rather than religiously, as if they did not care what the religious community thought of them.

Tax collectors were usually greedy, dishonest and immoral. Worse still, to a Jew, they were ceremonially unclean through mixing continually with non-Jewish people. Who but Jesus would call a man like this to be his follower? Who but Jesus would choose such a man to be an apostle? Jesus went to dinner at Levi’s house; and this scandalized the teachers of the law who saw it as going too far. This was because the house was full of tax collectors and ‘sinners’, with not a ‘righteous’ person among them. ‘Sinners’ may simply be a bitter reference to the same tax collectors, or it may refer to the other people from the margins of society who also flocked to Jesus for forgiveness and a new life.

The teachers of the law asked Jesus’ disciples why he behaved in this way. Jesus overheard them and answered by saying that just as it was only to be expected that a doctor should associate with sick people, so it was natural that he should mix with sinners. The whole purpose of Jesus’ coming was to call such sinners to a change of heart and life (17). To those who were self-righteous and self-satisfied, he had nothing to offer, for the only way to enter the kingdom of God is as a self-confessed sinner. Do ‘loan-sharks’, cheats and prostitutes flock to our churches today? And would we welcome them if they came in penitence and faith? Or would we react in the same way as the teachers of the law? Would we be embarrassed and turn away?

2:16. Table fellowship indicated intimate relations among those who shared it. The

Pharisees were particularly scrupulous about their special rules on eating and did not like to eat with less scrupulous people, especially people like tax gatherers and sinners. Here they assume that Jesus, being a wise teacher, ought to share their religious convictions. Jesus' reply plays on a common image of the day (comparing physicians and teachers) to make his point.

2:18-22 The old and the new (see Mt. 9:14-17; Lk. 5:33-39). Jesus' unorthodox behavior did not only provoke the criticism of the religious authorities, it also puzzled ordinary people. They wanted to know why Jesus' followers were different from those of the Pharisees and John the Baptist and did not seem to worry about some of the rituals of Judaism like, for instance, the weekly fast days. Such practices, though not in the Law of Moses, had come to be just as important in Jewish eyes. Jesus gave a quick answer: nobody fasts at a wedding-feast. Fasting shows sorrow, and if there is any sorrow, it would be after the feast, when the bridegroom had left the party. This may have been a popular proverb (like the saying about doctors and sick people above) but Jesus clearly meant himself when he spoke of the bridegroom. The words taken from them imply violence (if not death), so Jesus may have been speaking about the cross, bringing sorrow to all.

gain (see 2:13-17) Jesus does not appear religious enough for the traditionalists; but he has a new kind of religious lifestyle in mind.

2:18. The Law required fasting only on the Day of Atonement, but many other fasts had been added by religious Jews, especially by groups like the Pharisees (many of whom may have fasted without water twice a week, especially in the dry season). Fasting was an important practice to join with prayer or penitence, so it would have been unusual for disciples (prospective rabbis) to have avoided it altogether. A teacher was regarded as responsible for the behavior of his disciples.

2:19-20. Wedding feasts required seven days of festivity; one was not permitted to fast or engage in other acts of mourning or difficult labor during a wedding feast. Here Jesus makes an analogy about the similar inappropriateness of fasting in his own time.

2:21-22. Again the issue is the inappropriateness of fasting in the present circumstance. Jesus uses two ordinary facts to make his point. Older clothes had already shrunk somewhat from washing. Wine could be kept in either jars or wineskins; the latter would stretch. Old wineskins had already been stretched to capacity by fermenting wine within them; if they were then filled with unfermented wine, it would also expand, and the old wineskins, already stretched to the limit, would break.

There is an issue here that goes deeper than fasting alone. If Jesus had brought fresh spiritual life, could it be contained within the old rigid forms of Judaism , The Old Covenant, The Mosaic Law or would it need new or fresh forms?

Jesus never condemned fasting; he fasted himself. But formal and compulsory Jewish fasting would not fit with the freedom and spontaneity of the new life which he brought. Are we stifling new life by old structures or traditions, however beloved they may be to us? Some structures or traditions we must have but if have we worked out new forms are they suitable?

This bring us to a good place to consider in light of the New Kingdom of Christ, and Christ our New Covenant and some of what we have done here at New Covenant Baptist Fellowship in the last two years. It fits perfectly as an application of this passage to our present body life.

When the former pastor resigned, there were those attending this fellowship who were greatly displeased with the biblical way in which his resignation was received by the two men in leadership at that time, Mike and Ted. There were those who were seeking an immediate restoration of the former pastor because he had , to some degree, admitted his fault and sought forgiveness. However, the nature of the fault could not lead to an immediate restoration and even if it could have there were other issues concerning the qualifications of an elder that needed to be reconciled.

A short time and numerous events involving other people and another church, which has subsequently closed it doors, proved that if this fellowship was going to move forward, that the former pastor and others, as old wineskins, would not be able to

Mark 2:13-22 New Covenant Baptist Fellowship Pastor Joseph Krygier November 11 2007 5
contain the new fellowship that God had purposed.

A week after the resignation I began as interim – pastor. I suggested three ways in which I could serve in that capacity. An agreement was made and we began a course of prayer and action to remold the fellowship into a more biblically compatible body of believers, doctrinally and in practice.

We studied God and His attributes,(to know him better) the Sermon on the Mount (to understand the radical call of New Covenant discipleship), Philippians (a loving church that loved Christ), what a biblical church, the Gospel and leadership should like (Nine Marks), the Doctrines of Grace (in the Gospel of John) and Baptist Church history.

The men studied theology with a New Covenant Theology emphasis and the ladies studied the Titus 2 woman. We did all of this in the first year of being together.

We reconstituted as New covenant Baptist Fellowship, wrote a new constitution and by-laws, wrote a new book of faith and practice and severed our association from the GARB and a few more folks left once the process was completed. In October of 2006 I was asked to stay on as lead elder and 6 weeks ago I have been with you for a year in that capacity.

One of the highlights of our last year was our New Covenant Theology Conference in Smicksberg Pa. and our church being represented in Australia with me teaching at the God's Glorious Covenant conference along with Shane Becker in Brisbane. Our website has expanded considerably and now we wait to see what the next steps in God's purpose for us are.

As we are something new in tradition and purpose it is invigorating to experience the grace of God. As we treasure Christ more and love Him more we can understand what Jesus was saying to those Pharisees about the old ways not being compatible with the new.

This is why we embrace New Covenant Theology as a way of understanding the big picture of the bible and we believe it to be a better biblical theology than Covenant

Christ preached a new kingdom and a New Covenant. His kingdom is not what was expected. His Covenant is a superior covenant in every part. It is not just a continuation of the Old, very clearly taught by Jesus when we study the Sabbath, Lord willing next week. It is new and yet does contain elements of the Old but as part of the New and therefore they are changed. There is continuity but there is greater discontinuity because of the very nature of the New Covenant and the kingdom that Christ will build which is His body, His bride, His church birthed through the blood of the cross.

The superiority and the priority of Christ has been the focus of our afternoon study for the past two months and continues. It corresponds, in a more detailed way, with what we see Jesus do and what we hear Him teach.

For those to whom Jesus was speaking, He was making the point that if He is bringing new and fresh spiritual life then the old ways of Judaism, which had altered and added to God's original covenant, were not His way.

As a church, we have nothing to return to but have the necessity to move on for the glory of Christ and to be more of what Christ has provided for us in faith and in practice.

Some of this is practical for us. For example, just because a song is in a hymnbook does not mean it is doctrinally correct. Some books may have more correct theology than others. Some newer songs may have better theology than older songs but we may not like the musical style which in the end is a personal preference most times. The bible does not address style but does contain content, the Psalms.. So what do we do to be sure that our singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs expresses what we truly believe the bible teaches and encourages us with bible truth and helps us to worship Christ?.

We make our own hymnal using songs from every age that glorify Christ and speak the truth of our relationship with Him. Do all of our songs have to sound like death dirges? No. Should we sound like a rock concert? I don't think so.

Are many forms acceptable as worship- yes. And the primary reason for this is there are different styles of music in different countries. Christian music was not created in America or in Europe. It existed first in the Middle East. How many middle eastern tunes do we know to sing with good doctrine?

The fault of some missionaries, historically, has been that they have tried to westernize everything about the church even to the extent of hauling organs into the Congo because you could not sing hymns without one, or so they believed.

So just as Jesus was talking about new forms or structures or new life he did not condemn everything associated with the old, again using fasting as an example, but He gave it its proper place in the new Way.

All things have their proper place in the new way and we must strive to understand it as Scripture teaches it. We must not lose sight of the freedom we have under the New Covenant and yet not use that freedom improperly.

Freedom does not mean we can do anything just for the sake of doing but it also means that we are not bound by regimentation according to the traditions of men that are not biblical mandates.

How should I dress in the pulpit? Do I need a pulpit? Should I preach standing up or sitting down? Is there really a difference between preaching and teaching? When or how often should there be interaction while teaching is being given? Where does Scripture give me hard and fast laws about these things?

Jesus, Paul, Peter and John did not wear a suit or tie or even any special Sabbath go to meeting clothes. They were on the go and dressed appropriately in common garb.

After the Resurrection people did not go out to buy a new suit of clothes or a dress or a hat to wear to church on Easter Sunday. Is there anything blatantly wrong with doing this. No. But it can be done in a manner which is all about pride and self as I once was told by my wife that a woman told her pastor's wife and said "She is the sexiest woman in the church."

Sometimes the Apostles and even Jesus probably looked pretty dirty after a days street preaching and needed their feet washed. Jesus and the apostles sat on cushions on the floor and conversed and taught the Scriptures. Sometimes the Word was declared in the public square, sometimes in people's homes as we saw last week and sometimes in prison. This was the culture around them.

When I was a new believer, I was visiting Deborah in Kentucky, before we were married,. We visited a small church where the pastor obviously did not get paid very much and if I recall worked on a farm as well. He had on a blue suit, a worn out white shirt and some black shoes. His shoes did not shine very much and the edge of his trousers were actually a bit frayed and worn. I cannot recall what words he spoke today but he spoke with such passion and compassion and you could see his humility before God that it would not have mattered if he had worn some old bib blue jeans and a tee shirt, he spoke the word of God and I remember him to this day as a model of a godly minister.

We do not want to do new things just to do something new.

Whether it is the songs we sing, how we organize and structure our meetings, whether we teach or preach, how we dress, how we do out reach – what is important is that Christ has made us new creatures in Him. He has given our fellowship new direction.

We cannot attach ourselves as a patch to an old garment or be new wine in an old wineskin. We are members of a new and better way. We need to understand this,

We have no right to make laws out of our personal preferences. If we all agree on some preferences that is fine however we cannot impose those preferences on others as law and condemn them or label them as not being as spiritual as we are.

Anything that we do that might be new as we continue to mature as a body of believers should first of all be expressing our love for Christ and secondly embracing the freedom we have in the New Covenant. We are not to make laws where they do not exist. Remember, Jesus did not condemn fasting but he did not make it New Covenant Law.