



Christ questioned about

**Fasting**

## Fasting

Welcome to Jesus Time where we spend time with Jesus in His time and culture.

Here once again we pick up with the conversation between Jesus our Christ and some of the other guests at Levi/Matthew's house- the Jewish Tax collector during the banquet that Matthew was hosting in honor of Jesus.

✝ Then they said to Him, “The disciples of John [the Baptist] often practice fasting and offer prayers [of special petition], and so do the disciples of the Pharisees; but Yours ( followers of Jesus ) eat and drink. Luke 5:33 Amplified

So what is Biblical fasting?

The simplest explanation for fasting is a religious discipline in order to dedicate oneself in Prayer with abstinence from food for a prescribed period of time in order to focus one's heart, mind, and soul upon GOD. Often within the Old Testament the suffering of fasting was combined with the public humiliation of wearing sackcloth. These were each employed for specific reasons personally or even collectively as a group for a greater cause before the Lord.

It is thought and taught that abstaining equates unto sacrifice that clears our thoughts and brings into focus our guilt of sin & rebellion before Holy GOD in repentance before Him with genuine reverence.

Often fasts are respectfully held in mourning after the loss of a loved one or for a personal or even greater public tragedy, danger, or in a time of need.

Fasting is intended to prepare us to be able to receive communication from GOD for His Blessings.

Here are 3 of the most famous personal fasts within the Bible:

Moses fasted when he received the Ten Commandments within Deuteronomy 9:18 & Exodus 34:28.

King David fasted for his ill fated son because of his Sin with Bathsheba. 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 12:16

& of course Jesus our Christ fasted for 40 days before being tempted by Satan. Matthew 4:2

Yom Kippur known as the “Day of Atonement” is probably today the most well known public day of fasting on what is now the Jewish civil New Year. This is considered to be the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. This is a day of repentance and acknowledgement of one's Sin before Holy Jehovah.

Beginning in late September or early October on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Tishrei, the seventh Biblical month, exactly ten days after Rosh Hashanah- the Jewish New Year, which begins with the “ten days of repentance” that concludes on Yom Kippur.

Whereas the traditional Biblical Jewish New Year begins on Passover in the first month of Nisan. (Easter)

The Fasting of Yom Kippur traditionally is observed for a full 25 hours even going as far as to not wearing any shoes, bathing, or using anything considered to be of earthly pleasure by ancient custom.

Here we are reading from “What is Fasting” by Grace Ruiter on Faithward.org:

Regular Fast: A regular fast is when you abstain from all food and drink except for water.

Partial Fast: This is a type of fasting that involves abstaining from a particular type of food like sugar or strong drink. Daniel's fasted this way at times while he was in Babylon for example: Daniel 10:3

Absolute Fast: An absolute fast is when you abstain from food and drink of any kind for a short time.

✝ At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. <sup>3</sup>I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over. Daniel 10:2 NIV  
( Example of Daniel partially fasting & abstaining.)

After the time of the Apostles when the Age of the Apostolic Fathers concluded- meaning those who knew and were directly taught by the Apostles, it was greatly feared that many would add onto or take away from the disciplines of Discipleship of the pure Faith for their own purposes or greed.

Jesus Himself names two of these false teachings within His Letters to the Churches of Revelation.

First were the “Nicolaitans” this word is an combined term in Greek with “Nico” meaning victory while “Lations” being a phrase stating “over the laity.” Combined we get “victory over the laity.”

As in a hierarchy of powerful piety installed over the Faithful in order to dominate and control the masses. Remember Jesus time & again spoke against organized manmade superstitions of tradition.

The second heresy- which means a belief specifically against Biblical instruction was identified by Christ as those claiming to have “Secret Knowledge.” ( of or about GOD. )

Jesus condemns a hierarchy Lording over His believers with quote; “Secret Knowledge” & the most guilty of this within the early days of the Church were a group known as the “Gnostics.”

Ultimately they assumed positions of authority within the Papal system claiming and using their “Secret Knowledge” while installing their “Nicolaitan” leadership system of oppression.

Thusly their “Heresy” of promoting false ideas became complete in an “Apostasy” which means the total abandonment of a proper Biblical belief.

The point I’m getting at here is this:

As these things emerged within the early Church they were contested by & with proclamations of Faith.

The two most widely accepted of these proclamations of Faith- in order to keep the Faith free of the corruption of Heresy leading unto Apostasy are known as the Nicene Creed and the Apostles Creed.

The Apostles Creed originated circa 5<sup>th</sup> century Gaul ( France ) and is used by the Catholic Church and many main line Protestant Denominations. However with its Latin Roman Language most Orthodox and some Non Denominational Protestants do not use this one.

The earliest of these Creeds or statements of Faith is the Nicene Creed which is still used and acceptable by each the Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic people of Faith.

The Nicene Creed was adopted in 325AD at the first Council of Nicea in Modern day Turkey. (Iznik today)

The Coptic Church has the tradition that the original Nicene Creed was authored by Pope Athanasius I of Alexandria. However Church historians have proved it was adopted and installed by the Church after being submitted by Caesarea, as in brought to the council by Eusebius of Caesarea.

Finally here is the earliest known and most widely accepted Christian profession of Faith:

### *The Nicene Creed*

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He arose again from the dead.*

& presented here are the additional original words within the Nicene Creed about Jesus our Christ:

*And in one lord, Jesus the anointed, the only begotten son of God, begotten of the father before all worlds, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the father, by whom all things were made.*

& all of this brings us to our point of how this relates unto our topic of fasting:

The “ Didache.” ( pronounced in English as Did-Ache)

The Didache has a standing understanding that it is in fact the earliest surviving Christian document speaking as to Faith of belief, Doctrine defining of said beliefs, & Theology. (the study of GOD.)

What is unique of the Didache is that it dates all the way back to the Apostolic Fathers- again those personally instructed by the Apostles and Disciples whom walked and talked with Christ Jesus.

Most of these Fathers are famous- such as Polycarp, the Apostle John’s understudy whom later ran the Apostle Paul’s Seminary in Ephesus, Clement the first Bishop of Rome, & Ignatius of Antioch whose Theological and Historical Church writings survive even to this day just to name a few.

Rediscovered only recently by scholarly standards, the Didache which means “THE Teachings of the 12.” As in the 12 personally chosen Apostles of Christ our Lord with Saul/Paul replacing Judas Iscariot. The Didache was found included within another ancient codex in 1873.

This be the reason Why? You most likely have never heard of the Didache before.

From Wikipedia: Didache; The text was lost, but scholars knew of it through the writing of later church fathers, some of whom had drawn heavily on it. In 1873 in Istanbul, metropolitan Philotheos Bryennios found a Greek copy of the Didache, and he published it in 1883.

From my personal study notes; The Didache contains three Christian practices for the disciplined Disciple of Christ that are historically detailed. They are; Baptism, Eucharist, & Fasting.

So, as too the Didache upon Fasting:

It is explained that the early Church were to hold their Fasting differing from the traditional Jewish fast days of Monday & Thursday. To be exact the Jew on these days fasted from sun up to sun down.

Much the same as those of the Islamic Faith do today during Ramadan- no eating during sunlight.

Often during Jesus Time, Jews- would actually donate their food budgets for these two fasting days to charity or for the poor.

In keeping with 1<sup>st</sup> century boldness & being as direct, the Didache expressly forbids fasting with quote; “Jewish Hippocrates” on Monday & Thursday.

However fasting in likewise manor for two prescribed fasts a week was indeed also an early Christian Church practice.

Recommended as recorded by the Apostolic Fathers as being the personal habit of the Apostles. Whom were all Jewish of course to take place for Christ’s Church upon Wednesdays & Fridays.

Remnants of this tradition can still be observed within the Roman Catholic, the Orthodox, and even some Protestant Denominations of the Lenten season on Fridays, Ash Wednesday, & Good Friday.

Whereas abstaining from meat, olive oil, fish and dairy still exist within the Eastern Orthodox on Wednesdays & Fridays as well as the advisement of chastity on Fridays.

This is still recommended within certain ultra traditional Orthodox diocese even to this day.

The point is this, the customs of organized fasting within select Christian communities as too the source of origin of these beliefs, has been rediscovered as in pertaining to the personal habits of the original 12 Apostles and their Jewish roots.

Continuing

✝ Jesus said to them, “Can you make the wedding guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? <sup>35</sup> But days [for mourning] will come when the bridegroom is [forcefully] taken away from them. ( Then ) They will fast in those days.”

Luke 5:34 Amplified

Of course here is a reference by Christ that He was fully aware of His impending death at the conclusion of His Earthly public Ministry. Jesus's Words may have seemed like a mini riddle to those close enough to have heard Jesus's response-

However we as in the Church, time and again within the Gospels are called the Bride of Christ. Indeed supposing that Jesus is our Bridegroom meaning while the Groom was present with His Bride it was a time of celebration and not for the fasting of mourning.

Then, Christ explains once the Bridegroom-He, has been taken away from us, then will be the time of fasting for His Church.

Also when Jesus refers to Himself as the Bridegroom this was an Old Testament reference unto GOD. Get that?

Those present should have understood Jesus's mini parable of Himself as the Bridegroom of His Church, because this is exactly how the Old Testament refers to Israel, as the Bride of Heavenly Father Jehovah. In fact for ease of understanding so can we.

As in Father GOD and His Bride Israel, are in fact estranged at this time due to Israel's rejection and hard heartedness unto their Son- Jesus, born human of Jewish ancestry & begotten of the Father. GOD among us. However scripture states the time is coming at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation to be exact when Israel will accept Her Savior and be restored unto her Husband GOD. As for now mother Israel refuses to submit herself underneath her Son- Jesus's authority.

Israel called the Bride of Heavenly Father.

✝ As a young man marries a young woman, so will your Builder marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.

Isaiah 62:5 NIV

Israel predicted to be restored unto Heavenly Father on "That Day" which is always the day of Messiah.

✝ And in that day, says the LORD, you will call me, 'My husband, And I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. <sup>20</sup> I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD.

Hosea 2:19-20 RSV

Get that?

These two Prophets- successively one each of major & minor, do report that GOD desires to know each of us, those whom love and believe in Him intimately Spiritually.

Once again this is in fact Why? We were created by GOD in the first place.

To be a part of our Heavenly Fathers Family meaning apart from GOD we have no real true purpose.

Also note when Jesus refers to Himself as the "Bridegroom" He is indeed calling Himself GOD. & of course we know Biblically the Bride of Christ is us- His Church, aka the body of Christ.

For the record here was Jesus's actual advice later that He gave to His Disciples about Fasting unto GOD.

✝ When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:16-18 NIV

Continuing

✝ He also told them a parable: “No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old one; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. <sup>37</sup> And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new [fermenting] wine will [expand and] burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. <sup>38</sup> But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. <sup>39</sup> And no one, after drinking old wine, wishes for new; for he says, ‘The old is fine.’” Luke 5:36-39 Amplified

Here Jesus uses two distinct metaphors pertaining as to Why? He has separated His Believers from those of the Old Testament covenant. These two lessons quickly demonstrate that Judaism and what would become known as Christianity would not mix.

Of course we do understand that old wineskins are dried out and brittle and will certainly burst open with the fermentation of new wine. Also we do not cut out holes in a new pair of jeans just to sew a patch upon an older pair. We repair older jeans by reusing the good parts from older pairs that are not wearable anymore.

Here are two Biblical historical commentaries as too the practical meaning of these verses:

Men are not wont to be immediately freed from old prejudices.

John Wesley explanatory notes 1754-65

These inquiries about the difference between My disciples and the Pharisees, and even John's, are not surprising; they are the effect of a natural revulsion against sudden change, which time will cure; the new wine will itself in time become old, and so acquire all the added charms of antiquity. What lessons does this teach? Tis for those who unreasonably cling to what is getting antiquated. JFB or Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, Bible commentary 1871

Matthews parallel account of this conversation concludes with Christ's words:

“ in this manner both will be preserved ” meaning both the Old and the New Covenants each of whom will be restored Spiritually by Christ will also be redeemed.

When? As recorded within the prophetic portions of the Biblical Time lines. (concludes Rev. 6-19)

Ultimately the Old Covenant is renewed while the New remains true- combined as one in the Lord.

The Old Testament gave to us GOD'S Law by which demonstrates that we as a race are hopelessly lost in our Sin, and as such we are actually incapable of keeping His Law.

Thusly the Lord sent His Prophets to inform ahead of a Saving Messiah whom would revive Spiritually alive those whom would Willingly receive and believe in Him. (Messiah Jesus)

Where as the New Testament looks back at the cross of Christ in which GOD'S Grace is by Faith.

So, it is the same.

Depending upon ones personal acceptance of Messiah from wherever we lived in history.

You either believed GOD'S Word in Faith and looked ahead as too the coming of Messiah- or you look back in Faith at the life of Christ as the Savior.

Either way it is GOD'S Grace by Faith in and through His Messiah Jesus, who is our Living Sacrifice for our Sin, as our redeemer (paid our sin debt) to Almighty Jehovah, thusly restoring our Spiritual life, because we believe and then receive eternal life in and by Jesus our Saving Messiah Christ.