

A NEW WINESKIN

Mark 2:18-22 (NKJ)

The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"

And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while 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 from them, and then they will fast in those days.

*"No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse **"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 new wine must be put into new wineskins.**"* (Emphasis added)

The scribes and the Pharisees were relentlessly trying to find an occasion to accuse Jesus of some matters concerning the law. One day they asked why His disciples were not fasting and praying after their custom. Jesus answered them, "*do friends of the bridegroom or wedding guests abstain from eating while the bridegroom is with them?*" He was actually saying that people do not fast at a wedding feast.

Then Jesus added: "*no one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment...no one puts new wine into old wineskin...*". At first glance, Jesus' response to the Pharisee comes across like a brainteaser: what does old and new cloth, new wine and old wineskins have to do with weddings and fasting?

A quick analysis of this passage leads to two conclusions:

1. Jesus contrasts the pharisaical fasting and a wedding feast
2. The "old" refers to such fasting and the new refers to a wedding.

Wedding feasts speak of joy, relationship, intimacy, exhilaration and delight, while fasting suggests mourning, bereavement, sorrow and sadness. These have no place at a wedding celebration.

The Pharisees practiced fasting merely as a form, a fleshly observance to regulations of the law. Their legalistic exercise considerably contrasted the vitality of the relationship that Jesus enjoyed with His disciples. Therefore, Jesus was saying that joyous times are not times for fasting because legalism cannot contain joyfulness, just as old, brittle wineskins cannot hold fermenting wine. A footnote for this passage in the Spirit Filled Bible, reads: "Past, traditional structures cannot be imposed on the present renewal. Yesterday's forms are incapable of handling today's dynamics of spiritual renewal".

Sadly, we tend toward rules more than we tend toward relationship, but the dynamic spiritual renewal that is beginning to sweep within the Body of Christ is based

on connection with the Spirit of God, rather than legalistic adherence to rules and regulations, to forms and methods.

A fermenting process in the Spirit has started indeed. God wants to pour out His New Wine. The new thing that God wants to do in this generation is beginning to appear.

THE NEW WINE

Like in a marriage, the spiritual renewal that is coming will be the outcome of the intimate relationship between the Church and her Bridegroom Jesus. It will happen when God and His people are joined in covenant, precisely a marriage covenant. It will not be birthed by methods, things done in the energy of the flesh, plans and strategies born out of the ingenuity of the human mind, which are incapable of bringing spiritual results. This is the stiffness of the "old" wineskin, the hardness of legalism with its unmovable forms.

God the Father does not want a loveless Bride for His Son. Jesus Himself came to rescue us from a humdrum Christianity. He came to save us from lifeless routines and to redeem us from legalism, which is a religious spirit (Galatians 4:5). Therefore, He requires a new wineskin or He needs to condition the old one so it will stretch and soften and have a new shape. However, we need to want it, we need to choose the stretching and then embrace it when it comes. We need to desire His presence more than anything else and at any cost. Moses prayed, "if Your Presence doesn't go with us, we won't move". Exodus 33:15 (paraphrased).

The process of softening happens through pain; when we embrace it and when - through it - we run to Him, we discover our absolute helplessness and His complete sufficiency.

LEGALISM GENERATES SELF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Trusting in our own strength and in our own methods and ideas makes us independent. Independence breeds self righteousness and it gives the enemy a tool he can use to badger us, as in the case of Joshua the High Priest.

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"

*Now Joshua was clothed with **filthy garments** and standing before the angel. And he spoke and said to those who were standing before him saying, "**Remove** the filthy garments from him." Again he said to him, "See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with **festal robes**." Then I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the LORD was standing by. **Zech 3:1-5 NAS** (Emphasis added)*

...all our righteous deeds are like a **filthy garment** ...**Isa 64:6 NAS** (emphasis added).

The prophet Zechariah, in one of his visions, saw Joshua the High Priests clothed in filthy garments. The prophet Isaiah clarifies that the filthy garments are deeds done in our own righteousness (Isaiah 64:6). They are works of the flesh done under the law as opposed to those done in the Spirit, under the grace that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Romans goes a step further in declaring that walking after the flesh exposes us to condemnation or accusation:

*There is therefore now **no condemnation** to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: **He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.** Rom 8:1-4 (NKJ) (emphasis added).*

Joshua the High Priest became the subject of Satan's accusation in the presence of the very throne of God, because he was clothed with the filthy garments "of his self righteousness" (implied). Even so, the Lord rebuked Satan. Joshua was nonetheless a brand plucked from the fire, chosen by Him and belonging to Him, just like all of God's people. However, the filthy garment had to be removed. A stripping needed to take place. Stripping is a painful process and a humbling one. However, until we are naked before Him and comfortable with it, as in a marriage, until we are not ashamed to be exposed to His eyes, we cannot enter into that place of intimacy He gave His life to bring us into. Legalism will not take us to intimacy which will be the keystone of the coming "move of God", which will also lead to the bringing forth of something – rather Someone.

BARREN WOMEN

In Bible times, two people got married for the purpose of having children, namely sons. . What needs to come forth from the intimate relationship between the Church and her Bridegroom is the Image of Christ, THE SON (His Presence in us). Barrenness in those days was a reproach. The same reproach is also on the infertility of the Church that is void of His Presence. The Bible however, is full of records of barren wombs being miraculously open. Hannah, although deeply loved by her husband Elkanah (I Samuel), agonized in prayer until Samuel was born. Out of the dead womb of Elizabeth came John the Baptist and out of the dead womb of Sarah came Isaac, the prototype of Jesus Christ.

In Genesis 35: 16-18 we read of Rachel, whose womb God also opened. She gave birth to Joseph first, but she died in giving birth to the son she called Benoni or "son of my sorrow". Her husband Jacob on the other hand, called him Benjamin or "son of my delight" and "son of my right hand". What a beautiful picture of what is to take place in this next move of God! As Rachel, the Church that has embraced the

pain of the stretching and that is willing to die to every work of the flesh, is going to bring forth the "Son of God's right hand", as she carries His Presence wherever she goes. To be the containers of God's Presence is to reach the fullness of Redemption that brings humanity back into His Image.

FESTAL ROBES

In conclusion, Jesus spoke of a wedding feast that cannot take place unless there is intimate relationship with Him first. The purpose of the wedding is to bring forth The Son. First, we need to get the wedding garments. In order to receive them, we need to be conscious of what we are wearing. As long as we keep the old ones on, we cannot wear the new ones He requires.

Chapter 22 of the Gospel of Matthew, relates a parable Jesus spoke to illustrate a fact about the kingdom of heaven. He told of a king who made a marriage for his son and invited as many people as would come.

According to the custom of the times, the father of the Bridegroom provided appropriate wedding garments for the guests. One of them came wearing his own outfit, so the king said to him, "why aren't you wearing a wedding garment?" He turned to his servants and commanded them to tie up the man hand and foot and throw him out into the darkness. The man perished just as the old wineskin would be destroyed if new wine were poured in it.

So, what does the wedding garment and the festal robes look like?

The Lord told Joshua the High Priest, "**I** will clothe you". The king in the parable was the one that provided the wedding clothes; in another vision, the prophet Zechariah heard the Lord say, "Not by might, not by power, but by **My Spirit**". The Lord Himself (His Spirit) is the clothing for those who are willing to be stripped of man's methods and forms. The Lord requires obedience, not methods. He did not give Moses a "method", He just said, "speak to the rock" – Moses obeyed and water came, but when he did it his way, He lost out and never entered in.

It is interesting that Zechariah entered his own vision and cried, "put a clean turban on Aaron's head"

The head covering, as the Arabs wear, speak of submission. The ensign "Holiness unto the Lord" held the one of one of the High Priest". This speaks of the mind of Christ.

To be clothed by Him is to be clothed indeed with a rich garment. It is to be clothed with His passion, His Love, His fire, His righteousness (Isaiah 61:10) and His holiness. Oh, may the cry of our heart be that of the Apostle Paul as it is recorded in

Philippians 3:7-9

*"... what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, **the righteousness which is from God by faith...**" (Emphasis added).*

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