

Uniqueness of the Gospel

Mark 2:18-22

October 28, 2012

Introduction

Mark is now intensifying in the gospel the conflict between the religious leaders and Jesus. He records five conflicts in chapters 2 and 3. In each subsequent conflict, Jesus challenges the Jews on grounds of the authority to forgive, traditions, and the Sabbath. Each time, the Jews are stoked to higher temperatures to the point where they contemplate and plan on how to destroy and kill Him. They would find no satisfaction for their fury and hatred until He is dead.

Here Mark focuses on the tradition of the Jews—fasting. At that time, it was a common practice, and to the people, they saw whoever practicing fasting as being super-spiritual. However, we know from the gospels, that the religion of Judaism has taken on the superficial, hypocritical façade that has no benefit for anyone. Jesus never condemned the Old Testament laws, but He had no use for the man-made traditions that burdened the people. They became preoccupied with the prescriptions of the law rather than the intentions of the law. Jesus came to give life. It is only through Him that we obtain this new life. Here in the passage, we see the uniqueness of the life-giving gospel—the uniqueness of the true Christian religion.

Mark 2:18-22 *Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but Yours are not?"* ¹⁹*Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while He is with them? They cannot, so long as they have Him with them. ²⁰But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. ²¹No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. ²²And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins."*

I. Burden of the False Religion (18)

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but Yours are not?"

Note: Mark seems to imply that this question takes place right after the dinner party that Jesus and His disciples had with the tax collector and sinners. It might have been the next day.

- Why do yours not fast?
 - Critical statement

Note: Follow up on last week's message that Jesus was not holy enough to them.

- Fasting
 - Nothing to eat
 - Only requirement in OT

Leviticus 16:29 *This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves*

Note: 24 hour fast—it was required for everyone to do this.

- All other references in OT are voluntary (not requirements)
- Used in periods of grieving
- John's disciples
 - John the Baptizer—very popular, many followers
 - Fasted in preparation for Messiah's coming
 - Unaware that Jesus is the Messiah
 - Even though John the Baptizer had identified Jesus as Messiah (this was only in one day)

Acts 19:1-3 *When Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples² and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."³ So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied.*

- Pharisees fasting
 - Required to fast 2 times a week (Monday and Thursday)

Luke 18:12 *I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.*

- Solemn expression (hypocritical religion)
 - Basis of Pharisee religion (alms, prayer, and fasting)
 - Alms

Matthew 6:2 *So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men.*

- Prayer

Matthew 6:5 *And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men.*

- Fasting

Matthew 6:16 *When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting.*

Transition: Jesus was not against fasting. There is a time and place for fasting. What the issue is here is that the people were asking why His disciples were not fasting like the others. That was the issue. Their fasting was man-made traditions that had nothing to do with God. They did it because they thought it made them holy.

II. Joy of Being with Christ (19-20)

¹⁹Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while He is with them? They cannot, so long as they have Him with them. ²⁰But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.

- Do we fast at weddings?
 - No—absurd!
 - Time of joy and festivity
 - Wedding feasts
 - Lasts up to 7 days
 - Bridegroom attendants would make sure everything is good and plentiful
 - Rabbinic tradition prohibit fasting during weddings
- Bridegroom
 - Jesus Himself

Note: To the Jews in those days, there were no OT equivalents for Messiah being the bridegroom. However, there are references about God being the bridegroom and Israel being the Bride. The prophets would use this imagery to shame the people into repentance because it would have signaled out Israel as an unfaithful wife.

- He is the source of joy because He brings forgiveness
 - Forgave the paralytic
 - Forgave the tax collector
 - Ate with tax collectors and “sinners”
- Bridegroom taken away
 - First mentioned in Mark about Jesus’ death
 - Allusion to Isaiah

Isaiah 53:8 *By oppression and judgment He was taken away.*

Note: Jesus was fully aware of the malice of His enemies.

- They will fast
 - Such sorrow—the disciples fled when Jesus was arrested
 - Thomas’ sorrow in his declaration that he had to see Jesus first
 - Emmaus disciples were full of sorrow when they learned that Jesus had died

Transition: Jesus then gives a parable why the disciples do not fast. It has to do with the passing of the old and the coming of the new.

III. Uniqueness of the Gospel (21-22)

²¹No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. ²²And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins."

- New cloth on old garment
 - Patch to cover the hole or tear
 - It has not been washed
 - When washed, the patch would shrink, tearing from the old garment, making the tear or hole worse
- New wine in old wineskins
 - New wine—ferments and swells
 - Wineskin—goat leather/hide
 - When not used—the wineskin becomes brittle and cracks

- With new wine in old wineskins, the wineskin would burst because of new wine fermenting (swelling)
- The point?
 - How is this related to what Jesus is talking about with fasting?
 - Old garment / old wineskin--religion of Jews (legalism)
 - New cloth / new wine—gospel of Christ
 - Jesus is saying that we cannot stitch the gospel of Christ unto a dead religion like Judaism. They are not compatible
 - No religion in the world is compatible with the gospel, the message of Christ

Galatians 5:4 *You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*

John 14:6 *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*

Acts 4:12 *Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*

Conclusion

Jesus is saying that the only way to salvation is by faith in Christ through grace alone. If we try to mix religions with the gospel, then we are on the road to hell. We cannot mix and match what we choose. The gospel is exclusive, unique, the only answer and salvation.

Matthew 13:45-46 *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, ⁴⁶who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

The man sold everything he had for that pearl. We give everything we have for Christ and Christ alone. There is no other way. Have you given up everything for Jesus Christ?