

Comments on Matthew 9:14-17

John's disciples ask why is that we and the Pharisees fast but your disciples do not? Jesus responds that when he leaves they will have plenty of opportunities to fast. In previous discussions he noted (Matt 6:16-18) that hypocrites like to make their own fasting obvious and they are already repaid for it, so when you fast do not use their examples. Furthermore he taught (Matt 9:13) that his listeners are to learn the meaning of the words, "It is mercy I desire and not sacrifice."

Jesus is the Teacher who taught his disciples to have mercy on others as they encountered so many suffering and ill people. It is Isaiah's description of fasting (Isaiah 58:6-14) that Jesus practiced and taught to his disciples: releasing those bound unjustly, freeing the oppressed, sharing bread with the hungry, sheltering the homeless. These actions bring light, healing, protection and answered prayers, much more than do penance by bowing your head and lying in sackcloth and ashes.

Jesus also said one does not sew unshrunk cloth on an old cloak as it will eventually tear away. When old beliefs become worn and leave a breach the new beliefs to be implemented need to be appropriately summarized so that they correctly fill in the gap and mend the spiritual fabric without tearing away from it.

And he also notes that 'new wine is not to be put into old wineskins' else they will eventually rupture, something he likely witnessed in his day. So the new ways of Jesus put into the old Adam will not work as he will fail to understand them. Jesus told Nicodemus of being 'born again' (John 3:1-21) into a new creation, the new vessel for understanding Jesus' teachings.

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