



Taking a look at Luke

5:33-6:5.

The coming Messiah has
come.

Studying Your inner-Bible.

Luke 5:33-6:5.

33 And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink." 34 And Jesus said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? 35 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days." 36 He also told them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. 37 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. 38 But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. 39 And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'"

6:1 On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. 2 But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?" 3 And Jesus answered them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: 4 how he entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?" 5 And he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

Why the change?

We'll be dividing these verses into three passages:

- 1) the Pharisee's protest (Luke 5:33-35);
- 2) Jesus' two parables (Luke 5:36-39); and
- 3) The example of the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-5).

The unifying theme in these passages is the fact that the Messiah has come, and that changes everything!

Party fast? (vv33-35)

And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink." And Jesus said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days."

Questions:

1. What was the Pharisees' protest?

That Jesus and his disciples didn't fast (and by implication, fast and pray) like the Pharisee's disciples and John the Baptist's disciples did.

2. Why was this a problem for the Pharisees?

The basic thrust is that Jesus and his disciples behaved inappropriately for a group of people who say they follow God; that Jesus and his disciples are not serious or genuine in their discipleship because they are neglecting to fast. (This was their second complaint - see Luke 5:30).

3. Why do you think the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees fasted and prayed?

Historical studies say they fasted:

- (1) to express yearning for the coming of the Messiah;*
- (2) for the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel;*
- (3) to seek blessing from God for self and others;*
- (4) in repentance;*
- (5) when grieving.*

4. What did Jesus mean by, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?"

Jesus is referring to himself as the bridegroom. His presence and ministry brings joy, not the grief and yearning associated with fasting. Jesus' disciples didn't need to fast because:

- (1) he is the Messiah who has come;*
- (2) he is the King of Israel - where he is, the Kingdom is;*
- (3) he is the one through whom we are blessed by God;*
- (4) his forgiveness is the answer to sin;*
- (5) his presence is the answer to grief.*

5. What did Jesus mean when he said his disciples will fast when the bridegroom is taken away from them?

Firstly, Jesus' death will cause the disciples to grieve.

Secondly, when Jesus has rose and ascended to heaven, he was/is no longer physically present, and the establishment of his Kingdom was/is still in progress, leaving the disciples with reasons to fast, e.g:

- (1) to express yearning for Jesus' second coming;*
- (2) asking for greater fullness of his Kingdom on earth;*
- (3) to seek his blessing on ourselves and others;*
- (4) repentance from our continuing sinfulness;*
- (5) when grieving.*

6. How does this truth apply to us today?

Personally: fasting is worthwhile and expected (see Matthew 6:16-18) precisely because Jesus is not physically present with us until his Second Coming.

Church: Jesus is clear that there is lack and sorrow between the time he ascended to the Father and will come again. This needs to be taught and ministered to among Christians, and responded to by fasting.

Where are the biblical passages about Christian fasting?

Here is a non-exhaustive list: Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14-17; 17:21 (disputed), Mark 2:18-22; Acts 13:2-3, 14:23.

The old and new way. (vv36-39)

He also told them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'"

Questions:

1. Jesus talks about old and new garments and old and new wine. What is it he is really referring to?

The old garment refers to the way of relating to God through the Law in Old Testament and the various rules and regulations that have grown up around it. The new garment refers to the new way of relating to God through Jesus and the gospel that he proclaims and brings into being through his death and resurrection.

2. Why can't the old system the Pharisees and John the

Baptist followed be married to gospel?

The Old Testament Law and religious practices promised the coming of the Messiah, and so were necessarily organized around the absence of the Messiah, like a caretaker government waiting for the real ruler to turn up. When the Messiah (i.e. Jesus) came, the caretaker system was obsolete. To try to put Jesus into the old system would be like trying to fit a King into a republic, or to force a man to use crutches after his leg healed.

3. Can you think of a couple of examples where the Old Testament system of the Law can't be married to Jesus' coming without damaging both?

The sacrificial system - from our perspective, Jesus has fulfilled the sacrificial system, and to insist on it now is to deny his death and resurrection and to take away from the sacrificial system's role in pointing to Jesus.

The cleanliness laws - Jesus has come to make all things clean (see the previous study about his interview with the leper). To insist on these to is deny the effectiveness of Jesus' ability to make things clean, and again, take away from these laws' ability to point toward Jesus.

The Day of Atonement - a special day of the year is no longer necessary because Jesus has already atoned for us. To insist on observing this day insults Jesus' death and resurrection and takes away from the day's ability to serve a higher calling - pointing to Jesus.

(Also, see Galatians 3).

4. Jesus teaches continuity as well as difference when he compares two garments and two wineskins.

What continuity is there between the Law and the Gospel?

They are both ways to approach God laid out by God himself. They are like "Approach to God 1.0" and "Approach to God 2.0".

What are some of the biblical illustrations for the continuity/difference between the Law and the Gospel?

- Child under guardianship/son receiving inheritance (Gal 4:1-4; see also Gal 3:23-26)
- Son of a slave/son of a free woman (Gal 4:21-31)
- Marriage to the Law/marriage to Christ (Rom 7:1-6)

5. What does Jesus mean in verse 39? Why?

Jesus is saying the Pharisee (and by extension everyone) prefers the Old Testament Law over the New Testament gospel, because obeying rules is easier than grace.

6. Jesus speaks these parables immediately after the Pharisees complain that his disciples don't fast. How do these parables apply to fasting?

The Messiah has come and fulfilled the purpose of fasting in part (and will fulfill all reasons for fasting fully when he returns). Therefore it is not necessary for Christians to fast, but it is expected that they will as an expression of wanting more of what they have already experienced of

Quote.

"The newness of our fasting is this: its intensity comes not because we have never tasted the wine of Christ's presence, but because we have tasted it so wonderfully by his Spirit and cannot now be satisfied until the consummation of joy arrives."

(John Piper, A Hunger for God: Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer, p42.
http://www.desiringgod.org/media/pdf/books_hfg/hfg_all.pdf)

Christ.

If you believe you must fast, you are like those under the Law who fast in order to get what they still haven't got.

Another example. (vv1-5)

On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?" And Jesus answered them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?" And he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

Questions:

1. What were the Pharisee's upset about?

The disciples were not obeying the accepted rules for the Sabbath. (Note: the Old Testament did not forbid what the disciples were doing).

What were the accepted rules for the Sabbath?

The Sabbath was the day of the week – Saturday – where no work was to be done. In Exodus 20, in the 10 Commandments, God had said, "Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work..."

And there wasn't much else God said about it. What did it mean? What was work? What was rest? There were only a few other verses that talked about this, but they didn't really give much detail. The Jews, however, made a list of 39 activities that were prohibited on the Sabbath, causing even their fellow Jews to say, "the rules about the Sabbath...are as mountains hanging by a hair, for Scripture is scanty and the rules many."

So, even though picking heads of grain was one of the 39 prohibited activities (reaping), it wasn't actually prohibited by the Scripture itself.

2. What did Jesus' response mean?

Jesus was comparing himself to David and implicitly putting himself in the Kingly, Messianic line. Jesus was saying, "David's need overruled the strict interpretation of the Law for the benefit of his men. Someone greater than David - the Son of Man - is here. How much more can he avoid punishment when allowing something to benefit his disciples?"

3. How is Jesus 'Lord of the Sabbath'?

Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath in the same way Jesus is "Lord of fasting". His coming fulfills all the purposes of the Law and makes it obsolete. A central example is the external moral laws in the Law given to the Jews to follow; now Jesus has come, he has brought a Kingdom where everyone has the Law of God written on their hearts, making observing the Mosaic Law unnecessary.

When it comes to the Sabbath, Jesus has provided the eternal Sabbath rest that the Sabbath day in the Ten Commandments pointed toward, making the Sabbath law obsolete (see Hebrews 4).

4. How does that apply to us today?

We are no longer required to observe the Sabbath because Jesus has fulfilled the Law and specifically the purpose of the Sabbath. The Sabbath no longer applies to subjects of his Kingdom. However, taking a day of rest has other benefits (after all, it goes right back to Creation) and so is something that we can utilize. Like many other things in the Law, we can use the Sabbath, without being enslaved by it.

Three NT examples of using the Law and not being enslaved by it.

1. Paul taking a vow - Acts 18:18, Numbers 6.
2. Paul paying for others who took a vow - Acts 21:23-24, Numbers 6.
3. Paul talking about special days, food, etc. - Romans 14:5-9.

All together now.

Questions:

1. **The connecting theme between these three sections is the truth that the Messiah has come. How does that apply to us today?**

In the same way that the Law was created around the absence of the Messiah, every life without Jesus is built around the absence of the Messiah. We are created to have a Messiah King, but without him, we created "caretaker governments" in our lives.

When we meet Jesus our lives are transformed because the King has arrived and the "caretaker government" gives way to his power and authority, which is exercised for our good and his glory.

2. **Can you think of examples where your life has changed because Jesus the King has come into your life?**

[E.g. breaking a habit, using money differently, becoming passionate about righteousness, etc.]

3. **A constitutional monarchy has a monarch, but they are bound by guidelines in a constitution, (e.g. NZ, England, Australia, Thailand). Do you have your own constitution for Jesus to follow or do you trust him enough to give him complete sovereignty?**

[Remember to encourage people that changing in light of Jesus in our lives is a lifelong project, led by the Spirit's conviction].

How to use this Bible Study.

Here is a suggested format:

Context: Go over what has happened in the gospel story before the text you are studying.

Overview: Either read the whole passage, or briefly explain what the passage is about.

Focus: Talk about how you are going to approach the passage, what the controlling verse or idea is, and what sort of questions you will be asking of the text.

Study: Go through the questions, using the answers provided as a help. Don't be too loyal to this booklet. It may be that the group sees something more relevant in the text and takes the study in a different direction. In that case, just use this as something to fall back on.

Sing: As seen in the study on Luke 2:1-21, one of the biblical ways to respond to God's word is to sing, so pick one or two songs (or more if you feel so inclined) that are related to the content of the study. (E.g. when looking at the King and the kingdom of God in Luke 4:31-44, perhaps use *Majesty* by Jack Hayford and *This Kingdom* by Geoff Bullock).

Pray: Often the Bible will bring up certain issues for people that require repentance, forgiveness, encouragement. Make time for people to (voluntarily) discuss these issues and to pray for them if they are willing.