

I. Intro

A. Text: **Matt. 9:14-15**

*<sup>14</sup> Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?" <sup>15</sup> And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. (Matt. 9:14-15)*

B. Recap

C. Context

1. Disciples of John were upset.

a. We fast often. Even Pharisees fast.

i. Some scholars believe they fasted twice a week.

b. John the Baptist's very life was a fast.

*<sup>1</sup> In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, <sup>2</sup> and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" <sup>3</sup> For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.' "<sup>4</sup> Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. (Matt. 3:1-4)*

2. John's Disciples likely lived similarly to the way John did.

a. Jesus' disciples were experiencing joy, delight, and fullness.

b. John's disciples were upset at the difference.

*<sup>14</sup> Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?" (Matt. 9:14)*

3. Fair question: Why do we fast (often) and your disciples are full of food, full of joy (more often than not)?

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- a. Jesus used the scenario to teach perhaps the greatest teaching on fasting in all of the Bible.

## II. Body

<sup>15</sup> *And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? (Matt. 9:15a)*

### A. The Bridegroom Came... For His Bride

1. When Jesus revealed that He was the Bridegroom, He was saying a mouthful.
  - a. To a Jewish man or woman (who had been raised with a longing and waiting for Messiah to deliver them completely), this was a lot!
2. Scriptures probably flashed across their mind to support this Bridegroom statement.
  - a. **Isaiah 54:5**: *"For your Maker is your Husband, The Lord of hosts is His name; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of this earth".*
  - b. **Jer. 2:2**: *The LORD gave me another message. He said, <sup>2</sup> "Go and shout this message to Jerusalem. This is what the LORD says: "I remember how eager you were to please me as a young bride long ago, how you loved me and followed me even through the barren wilderness.*
  - c. **Hosea 2:14-16**: <sup>14</sup> *"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak comfort to her... <sup>16</sup> "And it shall be, in that day," Says the LORD, "That you will call Me 'My Husband,' And no longer call Me 'My Master,'"*
3. John's disciples asked Jesus a why question (about fasting).

*\*The reason they're NOT fasting? The Person everyone's been fasting FOR is standing right in front of them.*

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4. The Bridegroom God became a man and came to win over His Bride.
    - a. This Bridegroom God and King set His eyes on a people (as low as dirt) who had no intrinsic value in and of themselves.
    - b. Though this people possessed nothing to brag about (in and of themselves), God delighted in them (adored them, was jealous for them).
    - c. This Bridegroom vowed to transform Her into one glorious Bride without spot.
  5. This storyline started in a Garden (**Gen. 1-2**), and crescendos in a wedding banquet at the end of the age (**Rev. 19**).
    - a. Jesus was stating emphatically that He was the centerpiece of that story.

\*The Bridegroom God has finally come.

6. In that culture, it was completely inappropriate for anyone in the area to engage in hard work during wedding festivities.
  - a. It was unacceptable to do anything but enjoy the presence of the Bridegroom and the festivities that accompanied him.

#### 7. The Bridegroom Came

##### B. The Bridegroom Is Coming Again... For His Bride

<sup>15</sup> *And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. (Matt. 9:15)*

1. When the Bridegroom came...
  - a. He allowed Himself to be beaten and slaughtered to pay the price to have His Bride.

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- b. Went back to prepare a room for His Bride in His Father's House.
    - c. Promise: *"I will come again for you."*
  - 2. The Bridegroom left. But He is coming back to rescue His Bride forever. (**Jn. 14:1-3**)
  - 3. When He returns..
    - a. No more sin, temptation, or struggles.
    - b. No more sickness or death.
    - c. No more pain, addictions.
    - d. No more hunger, homelessness.
    - e. It's an absolute promise.
  - 4. All of these pleasures/deliverances are wrapped up in His Presence.

\* The Bridegroom Is Coming Again... For His Bride

C. Until He Comes: Holy Dissatisfaction

*15 ...But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. (Matt. 9:15)*

- 1. Until the Bridegroom comes back for us... We will fast, mourn, etc.
  - a. Fasting from this perspective is a cry that says we refuse to settle for lesser pleasures.
  - b. The Difference Between the Promise and the Present Situation is almost unbearable.

\*Fasting (for the disciple) is not a dissatisfaction with God. It's a dissatisfaction with everything that isn't God.

- c. So we mourn... that things now aren't quite what they will be when He returns.

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- d. Something inside the Bride says, “We won’t settle for this”.
  - e. Come, Lord Jesus, come.
- 2. Fasting is God’s method of reproducing a Holy hunger for the Bridegroom God to show up again... now.
  - 3. We were designed to experience our greatest pleasure in His Presence.
    - a. Our souls yearn when we don’t feel His nearness.

*<sup>1</sup> How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! <sup>2</sup> My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God... <sup>10</sup> For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. (Ps. 84:1-2, 10a)*

- b. Our DNA is arranged so that we find true pleasure from being with Him.
- c. So we ache when we don’t experience His nearness and all that comes with his presence.
- d. Fasting is a grace that God gives us to lead us back to sincere hunger for Him.

### III. Conclusion

#### A. Fasting Is About Wholehearted Desire

- 1. We serve a God of passion, delight, and magnificent emotions.
  - a. His love is NOT passive or distant.
  - b. His love is an all-consuming fire.
- 2. This God of fiery passions and emotions delights in us (even though we are weak).
  - a. He adores us. Loves us.
  - b. The God of fiery passions and emotions is jealous for us.

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- c. He is a God with a jealousy that burns stronger than the grave.
  - d. And He is jealous for the entirety of our hearts.
3. That space in our hearts that we've given to other pleasures, God demands that space (as ugly as it is).
- a. God is so jealous that He refuses to sit by idly and allow our passion for Him to be given to lesser pleasures.

B. Fasting Is About Love.

- 1. When Jesus connected fasting to His Bridegroom identity, He connected fasting to LOVE.
  - a. The deeper we walk into this wholehearted love and desire for the Bridegroom, the more we abandon lesser loves.

<sup>6</sup>Set me as a seal upon your heart, As a seal upon your arm; For love *is as* strong as death, Jealousy *as* cruel as the grave; Its flames *are* flames of fire, A most vehement flame. <sup>7</sup>Many waters cannot quench love, Nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, It would be utterly despised. (**Songs 8:6-7**)

- 2. Jesus forever tied fasting to His Bridegroom identity: Both His initial appearing and His final appearing.
- 3. That's why we fast.
  - a. We're not trying to convince a reluctant God to come near.
  - b. We're making room because He desires nearness, and we've discovered that NOTHING ELSE compares to Him.
- 4. Until the Bridegroom comes back for me...I REFUSE TO SETTLE FOR LESS."