

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

89- Hungering for God through Fasting- Part 10
Reasons to Fast in the New Covenant- Part 5

Church March 03, 2024

Matthew 9:14-17

14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, asking, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"

15 And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

16 But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results.

17 Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

We are continuing to determine if Fasting is the "**unshrunk cloth**" and the "**old wineskins**" of verses 16&17- as some teach. In other words, are the people who say that Fasting was an "Old Testament Truth" that has been made *obsolete* by the entrance of the New Covenant, teaching the Truth? Is it true that Fasting has gone the Way of Sabbath observance; going to the Temple in Jerusalem once a year; the Levitical Priesthood; Tithing; the Sanhedrin Court; animal Sacrifices; and the dietary and ceremonial Aspects of the Old Covenant?

And one of the main Reasons to *reject* such thinking is what Jesus Himself said at the end of verse 15:

... the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

... but then three weeks ago- we also began to look at five *more* Reasons that the New Covenant teaches us that Fasting is still a viable “Means of Grace”:

1. New Testament Believers Should Fast for “*God to raise up Ministries that will Change the World*”
2. New Testament Believers Should Fast for “*Waters that do not Fail*”
3. New Testament Believers Should Fast for the “*Safety of the Little Ones*”
4. New Testament Believers Should Fast for the “*Father’s Reward*”
5. New Testament Believers Should Fast for the “*Return of Jesus*”

... and last week we looked at #4- so, let’s look at #5 together:

5. New Testament Believers Should Fast for the “*Return of Jesus*”

Luke 2:36-38

36 And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,

37 and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.

38 At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Every time we partake of the Lord’s Table- we read over the Passage of **1Corinthians 11:23-34**. And in verse 24 we read these words,

This is My Body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me

... and then again in verse 25- we see these words,

This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me

... so, Jesus repeated that phrase,

Do this [eat the Bread and drink the Cup] in remembrance of Me.

Now, I've mentioned this several Times- but that phrase is very Important. It is a New Covenant Truth that very *narrowly* focuses our Minds and Hearts on the Fact that our Salvation required that Jesus die in our place. And so, this part of our Lord's Day "worship Service" - the "*Sacrament*" or the "*Ordinance*" of the "*Lord's Supper*" is carried out "IN THE NAME OF" or in the *Reputation* of- Jesus. So, we eat the Bread and drink the Cup- IN REMEMBRANCE OF- Jesus.

Now we all understand that back in **Exodus 12**- God gave a natural Sign; or a Symbol; or a Type of this New Covenant spiritual Reality. So, the symbolic *Pre-cursor* to the Bread and Cup at the Lord's Table in our Day- was the "*Passover Service*" of the ancient Jew's Day- where the Lord "passed over" every House that had the blood of a lamb on the lintel and two door posts.

And that is *symbolic* of the Reality that the Wrath of God- has now "passed over" all those- who have been washed in the Blood of Jesus; who have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth; and have been Forgiven and "made Righteous" (Justified) by Faith alone; and who have been adopted by the Father into the Family of God.

Now the Disciples, who ate that Last Supper with Jesus- were faithful Jews, who had been involved in the "Passover Service" their entire Lives. And every time they worshipped God in that Way- they did so- IN REMEMBRANCE of the glorious Deliverance found in **Exodus 12**.

And as they reclined at the Table that night- they didn't expect things to be any different. They fully expected Jesus- who was a Jew Himself- to partake of the Passover Service the very SAME Way that Jews had done so for about 1,450 years.

Yet Jesus changed this Service- forever that night. So, instead of Him partaking of the Passover Service IN THE NAME OF the Events of **Exodus 12**- Jesus- as God- sovereignly commanded them to partake of that Service "IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME!" And from that night to this very day- March 3, 2024- that is the Way ALL of the Disciples of Jesus have conducted the "Lord's Table". We DO NOT and we SHOULD NOT engage this Sacrament "in remembrance of" the Events of **Exodus 12**. That would belittle all that Jesus did. So, we engage the Lord's Table "in remembrance of Jesus" and in His finished Work.

You see, because Jesus has literally lived; died; and risen again- we no longer engage that Sacrament with the Symbolism of the blood of a lamb on the lintel and door posts of the house. Under the infinitely superior New Covenant- we now trust in the Reality of Jesus *personally*; and in His finished Work; as He has made us "clean" on the *inside* through our Faith in His shed Blood. And the Result of this- is we will NEVER die. In **John 11:26b**, Jesus said,

... everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.

... and in **John 8:51**- He said,

Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.

Now back in **Exodus 12**- God came down to kill ALL the 1st born in the Land of Egypt- both of men and animals. And by obeying His Instructions- God “passed over” the House of every Jew, who had carried out this Commandment with the body and blood of a lamb.

Yet, as *miraculous* and *astonishing* as that Event was- it was also vastly *Inferior*. How so? As Powerful and Miraculous as that Event was- that Old Testament Event did NOT have the Power to forgive a single Sin; or save a single Soul. All it did was to cause the Lord to *bypass* their House for that one single night.

By contrast, the *amazing* and *superior* Event that Jesus does to ALL who repent of Sin; and who put their Faith; Hope; and Trust in Him *personally*; and in His finished Work- is that they will be “**saved to the uttermost**” (**Hebrews 7:25 KJV**); and will escape *forever* the “spiritual Death” of God’s Wrath of eternal Damnation!

“*Okay, Brother Blair, that’s real nice- but why are you bringing this up in a Sermon about Fasting?*” Because what I just told you is true- it would be Wrong; Incorrect; in fact, it would be Sin- to partake of this Sacrament “in the name of” the Circumstances and Situations found in **Exodus 12**- when we now have the Reality of the sinless Life; vicarious Death; and bodily Resurrection of Jesus. And that may not mean a lot to you this Morning- but it was radical Theology when Jesus spoke those Words at the Last Supper with His Disciples.

You see, now that Jesus has come and fulfilled the Law; and now that Jesus has died and risen and ascended into Heaven- EVERYTHING we say; EVERYTHING we do; and EVERY aspect of Worship- is to Jesus ALONE! And God the Father approves of this.

Please read **Philippians 2:8-11a**:

8 Being found in appearance as a man, He [Jesus] humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...

... and to what End is all this Attention to Jesus carried out? Let's finish verse 11:

.... to the glory of God the Father.

This means that now that Jesus has come; and fulfilled the Law; and since He has died and risen and ascended- it is no longer acceptable to God the Father- for any form of Worship to be focused only on Him.

ALL forms of Worship must now be focused solely on Jesus. And God the Holy Spirit "moved" on the Apostle Paul to infallibly teach that this is now the ONLY Way that God the Father is glorified!

So, ALL Prayer; ALL Singing; ALL Giving; ALL Reading; ALL partaking of the Sacraments; and ALL Fasting MUST be done, "IN JESUS' NAME" or God the Father is *not* glorified!

So, since around 29-33AD¹- the Way that God the Holy Spirit moved on Moses to tell the Jews how to worship God- was forever *replaced* with the focus now on Jesus. And so, any Effort- by even sincere people- to return back to the Way God commanded Worship to Moses; or any *refusal* to worship Jesus in all that is done- is now Sin. It is NOT acceptable to God. God does NOT receive that kind of Worship; It does NOT bring God any Glory. And it does NOT work to the Believer's Advantage! Truly, today- it is Jesus or NOTHING!

So, for example, for anyone today to offer an animal Sacrifice; or to travel to Jerusalem once a year to worship God; or to submit to the authority of the Levitical Priesthood; or to accept the Rulings of the Sanhedrin Court; or to feel obligated to "pay Tithes"; or to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Table; or to Fast in the manner prescribed solely in the Old Testament- is to insult ALL that Jesus did in His sinless Life; and in His Death; and in His Resurrection!

And that includes Fasting. So, New Covenant Fasting is NOT just for the *immediate* Breakthroughs of stronger Faith; and spiritual as well as physical Healings; and a heart and mind that is determined to strive for glad Obedience; that will produce more Righteousness, but also for the *ultimate* Breakthrough- the Return of Jesus in Glory!

And we are told to not only fast for Jesus to return- but we are to also pray for it. In **Matthew 6:10a**, Jesus said we were to cry out to God,

Your kingdom come!...

... or as the early Church prayed,

"Maranatha!" = "Our Lord, come!"

¹ The approximate Time when Jesus died and rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven.

Now as we have seen so far in our verse-by-verse “Journey” through Matthew’s Gospel Record- that the former tax Collector used the phrase, “*Kingdom of Heaven*”- while all the other three Gospel writers used, “*Kingdom of God*”.

Now the Reason Matthew did this- was NOT because there are two different Kingdoms. There aren’t. *Both* Kingdoms are “*of God*”; and *both* are “*of Heaven*”. Matthew did this because he was trying to reach his Jewish Brethren with the Truth about the Kingdom being a Kingdom that is NOT “of this earth”. So, this Kingdom will NOT be like any other kingdom that people had inhabited- not even the Kingdom of Israel as described in the Old Testament. This Kingdom of Heaven will be utterly unique. But *why* was this important for them to know?

As I have told you many times- in order to understand the Bible correctly requires that we get the CONTEXT right. And the Context of the 1st Century Jew was that he was *eagerly* looking for God to use the Messiah to *forcefully*; *politically*; and *militarily* remove the pagan Romans from the Land that God gave to the Jews and restore the Kingdom to Israel.

You see, the *overwhelming* majority of Jews in the 1st Century were NOT looking for a Messiah to save them from their Sins. They believed then as well as now- that they were *already* “saved”; and were *already* “God’s people” by virtue of their natural birth as Jews (sons of Abraham). And this is *why* it was so *outrageous* for Nicodemus to hear Jesus tell him,

... Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. ... That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again. (John 3:3b; 6&7)

Nicodemus believed that his natural Birth had automatically made him to be a “child of God”; a “son of Abraham”; and an “heir to the Kingdom of Israel”. Nicodemus believed all that happened simply because he was born as a Jew. So, of what Value would this 2nd Birth bring to him? It was preposterous!

But by Jesus saying this to a “**ruler of the Jews**” (**John 3:1**)- the Lord was telling Nicodemus that he was completely wrong about his natural birth causing him to be a “child of God” by default. And Jesus was also telling this man- who had no doubt memorized most, if not all, of the Old Testament- that EVERY Act Nicodemus had done his entire Life- to try to *earn* God’s Favor- was a complete waste of Time; and had brought him no closer to God than was a Prostitute!

Dear friends, we MUST understand that the biblical Theology of

the New Birth *categorically* condemns the Man-made Theology that says that ALL Jews are “God’s chosen people” by their natural Birth; Bloodline; Genealogy; and Nationality. In other words, if what Jesus told Nicodemus in **John 3** is true- then it is *inconsistent*- on a fundamental level- to also believe and teach that the Jews are “God’s chosen people” by their natural Birth.

As Christians, we MUST teach and believe- that unless a person *personally* experiences the Miracle of the New Birth- he will spend all of Eternity- condemned by God- in a Lake of Fire! And that is because ALL human beings are born from their Mother- “fallen and sinful” through the “Original Sin” of Adam. And Jews do NOT escape this Truth. And so, ALL human beings- who live in EVERY Nation on earth; and who are raised; and who are taught; and who embrace EVERY other religion- even the Jews- MUST be born again!

Now it is an indisputable Fact of History that the overwhelming majority of Jews of the 1st Century- even those who believed and who were genuinely saved- were taught and they believed that God was going to send the Messiah to restore the *natural and political* Kingdom of Israel- back to its former glory that it had under King Solomon². They were NOT looking for a *spiritual* Kingdom that would completely *overshadow* and *replace* ALL natural and political Kingdoms.

Now to show you how engrained this false Teaching was in the mind and heart of most Jews of the 1st Century- please turn with me to **The Acts 1**. Now keep in mind what Dr. Luke infallibly wrote here in **The Acts** was AFTER Jesus had come and had lived a perfectly sinless Life. It was AFTER Jesus had totally fulfilled the Law. It was AFTER Jesus had died on the Cross. It was AFTER Jesus had physically risen from the Dead; and it was AFTER Jesus had spent 40 days with the Disciples-

... speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. (The Acts 1:3b)

And now Jesus and 500 people are on the top of the Mountain and Jesus is about to be *physically* lifted into the air right in front of them; as He ascends to sit at the “Right Hand” of God- where for over 2,000 years now- Jesus has faithfully made Intercession for the saints according to the Will of God!

And those 500 Believers had seen Jesus die and had seen Him after His Resurrection. And Jesus had spent 40 days with them- teaching them about His Kingdom. And yet, in verse 6- they ask Jesus the same, old, tired, unbiblical eschatological Question that was at the forefront of the mind of the overwhelming majority of every Jew who was alive in the 1st Century,

² During the Reign of King Solomon- the borders of the Nation of Israel extended North all the way to Damascus and South all the way to Egypt.

... Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel? (The Acts 1:6b)

Amazing! Jesus had just spent 40 days- speaking to them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God- and yet they still did NOT understand that the Kingdom Jesus was bringing with Him- was NOT the old, *obsolete* Kingdom of Israel! No! The Kingdom Jesus is bringing with Him will encompass the whole World! And that Kingdom will be inhabited with genuinely saved people out from EVERY Nation; Tribe; Tongue; and Language on earth- who have ALL *personally* experienced the Miracle of the New Birth! And that is *why* Jesus replied to that Question with this Answer:

... It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. (The Acts 1:7b&8)

So, Jesus was basically telling them to stop focusing on Israel; and Israel's Past- because that has become obsolete. And so, He tells them that once they are supernaturally empowered- they should focus on heralding the glorious Gospel about Jesus to the peoples of the entire World- so that the Prophecy of Habakkuk will be fulfilled...

... the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, As the waters cover the sea. (Habakkuk 2:14b)

... which is much larger and more important; and involves more people than the Kingdom of Israel.

Now let's look again at what Jesus said in **Matthew 9:15:**

The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Now I want you to notice at least four things here:

1. Jesus equates Himself as being the **"Bridegroom"**
2. Jesus equates His Disciples as being the **"Attendants of the Bridegroom"**
3. Jesus connects **"Mourning"** and the Bridegroom being **"taken away from them"**

4. Jesus connects “**Mourning**” with “**Fasting**”

Now the word that was translated here into English as “**Mourn**” is a Greek word (*pentheo*; Strong’s #3996)- which has to do with: Lament; Grief; Bewail; Sad; Sorrowful; and to beat the Breast as an outward Sign of inward Travail.

And Jesus said that the “**Attendants of the Bridegroom**” CANNOT “**Mourn**” [Fast] as long as the Bridegroom is with them. So, *why* were the Disciples of John and the Scribes and Pharisees mourning? *Why* were they in Grief and Sadness? And *why* were they Lamenting and Sorrowful? *Why* were they fasting? And the Answer is twofold:

1. They were NOT Jesus’ Disciples
2. They were grieving (fasting) over the Fact that, as far as they were concerned, Messiah had not yet come

But Jesus was there! And Jesus IS the Messiah! And so, that means that, *at best*, these Jews didn’t understand and were simply *incorrect* about Fasting. But, *at worst*, it means they didn’t believe that Jesus *was* the Messiah. And that would mean that their Fasting was an Insult to Jesus and was Sin.

And if that was true- it tells us that neither these particular Disciples of John nor the Scribes and Pharisees were the “Attendants of the Bridegroom”. But it also tells us that the Fast of both the Disciples of John and the Scribes and Pharisees was in vain. *Why*? Because either they didn’t *understand* that Jesus was the Bridegroom or they didn’t *believe* it. But either Way- their Fasting was amiss and was NOT honoring to God.

But then Jesus also said that when the Bridegroom is taken away- THEN His Disciples would Fast- meaning they would Lament; be in Grief; be Sad; be Sorrowful; and they would beat their Breast as an outward Sign of inward Travail.

So, now that Jesus has gone into Heaven to intercede for us- we should be in Grief. We should mourn. We should lament. We should be sorrowful; and we should fast. *Why*? Because the Bridegroom is NOT here! So, *part* of the Longing that causes us to Fast should be this holy Mourning- that our King is yet away from us and we want Him to come back!

But wait! I thought Jesus WAS with us. I thought He was “Immanuel” (God with us). In fact, the Bible says in **Ephesians 3:16&17a**:

that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...

... so, Jesus dwells *continually* in our Hearts through Faith! So, how is He NOT here? I mean isn't the very thing that makes the New Covenant so *infinitely* superior to the Old is that we now have "*Union with Christ*"?

And so, in Jesus Christ- God is NOT distant from us. He is close at hand. So, how is it that the Bridegroom is not here?

Jesus IS here- BY FAITH! Yet, Jesus Himself told us to pray that God's Kingdom would come to this earth- even though the Kingdom came in with Jesus. So, what does this all mean?

Jesus connects New Covenant Fasting with our Longing for the Return of the Bridegroom- IN FULLNESS! And the Church of Jesus is also called to put the Earnestness of Fasting behind Prayer, "*Your Kingdom come! Bridegroom, come! Jesus Return!*" So, our Fasting is a *outward physical* Manifestation of the inward "*Heart Hunger*" for the 2nd Coming of Jesus!

But there are Times that I wonder if Jesus means for Fasting to be a sort of "*counterpart*" to the Lord's Supper. Because Jesus said, "**Do this in remembrance of Me.**" So, by *eating*- we remember that Jesus HAS come; and that He HAS died for our Sins. But then by NOT eating- by Fasting- we say, "*Yes, but the Bridegroom is not here in Fullness.*" He was here, and He loved us to the End. And now we can eat and even *celebrate* with Feasting because He has come! But this we also painfully know: Jesus is NOT here like He once was. And that Absence is painful.

And so, the Sin and the Misery and the Injustice of this fallen World goes on- precisely because Jesus is NOT here to stop it. Because He WILL stop all of it- when He comes back. So, that Absence is painful.

Yes, we have this sweet and precious "*Union with Jesus*"- but we still struggle in our Bodies. And we fight against Viruses; and Germs; and Bacteria; and Disease; and physical Pain; and unfair Treatment by others; and even the *best* Saints- still die. And we know that the Fall caused it all. But we also know that when Jesus comes- He will change EVERYTHING!

We know that Jesus is NOT distant from us- yet we are still persecuted; and we are fought; and we fail. Our children are NOT where we want them to be; and many times- we fall asleep at night- weeping. And I think this is what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote that genuine Believers are, "... **sorrowful yet always rejoicing**" (2Corinthians 6:10)

So, in one sense- we are *constantly* rejoicing because of WHO Jesus is and WHAT Jesus alone has done. But in another sense- we are also *constantly* sorrowing- because Jesus is NOT here- in His Fullness.

The Lord is in our hearts by Faith- but His Church is still mostly despised by the World. And because this World is broken- we have to try to struggle to walk

“Counter-intuitively” against the normal Flow of this Life. But it’s hard. And we fail sometimes. And that causes us to grieve; and it causes us to fast.

But it won’t be hard at all when Jesus comes back. Yet now, we wrestle with Worldliness and Compromise and remaining Sin in our Lives- all because Jesus is NOT here- in His Fullness.

So, we are like sheep in the midst of wolves (**Matthew 10:16**). And that is painful. And so, we grieve- in THAT sense. We mourn- in THAT sense. And so, we fast. We *long* for Jesus to come again and take up His Throne; and reign supremely in our midst; and vindicate His people; and cause EVERYBODY to honor His Truth and marvel at His Glory.

So, the Feasting of the Lord's Supper expresses what HAS ALREADY happened; while our Fasting expresses what has NOT YET happened. In **Luke 18:6b-8** Jesus said,

6 ... Hear what the unrighteous judge said;

7 now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?

8 I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?

I wonder how many of us have ever considered that Jesus has appointed a Way for us to prepare for His 2nd Coming? Jesus said that God will send the Son of Man and bring about Justice for His elect who "**cry to Him day and night.**"

But what do they Cry? What do they Pray? They pray what Jesus told them to pray, "*Your Kingdom Come!*" They pray, "*Cause me to be able to forgive those who have wronged me- so that You may forgive me as I have wronged You.*" They pray, "*O, God- may Your Will be carried out in me and in this earth to the same extent that Your Will is carried out in Heaven!*" They pray, "*O, Jesus, see to it that Your Name is hallowed in the earth and never blasphemed again!*" They pray, "*O Lord Christ, our dear Bridegroom- hurry and come back! We long for Your sovereign Reign So, come reign as King. Come, and bring Justice to your people. Come, and marry your Bride!*"

And since the very Life of the Church and the Evangelization of the Nations is part of that Preparation- we cry out for that too. "*Lord, revive your people. Lord, cause your Word to triumph. Defeat all Unbelief; Defeat all Doubt! Save ALL Your people and let the Nations rejoice!*"

I say to you this morning- If you have eyes to see the Way the World is- in contrast to the Way it is *supposed* to be under the Lordship of Christ- you will feel the Need to fast and pray for Jesus to come back!

But we need to understand that calling for the Church to fast for Jesus to come back- is NOT new. Turn with me to **Luke 2:36-38**:

**36 And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,
37 and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.
38 At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.**

Now Mary and Joseph had just brought the infant Jesus into the Temple in Jerusalem- in obedience to the Law. And Dr. Luke tells us about two very old people- Simeon and Anna- who had lived their entire Lives under the *inferior* Old Covenant. And yet, God enabled both of them to recognize who this Baby was! And Simeon walked up to Mary and suddenly took Jesus out of her arms- raised Him up to God and said,

Luke 2:29-32

**29 "Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace,
According to Your word;
30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation,
31 Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
32 A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel."**

So, even though this old Saint had sacrificed animals his entire Life- somehow God caused Simeon to know that this eight-day old Baby was, "God's Salvation!" Yet he never heard a single Teaching by Jesus. He didn't witness a single Miracle performed by Jesus. And He saw neither the Crucifixion nor the Resurrection. But he knew! And he believed! And Dr. Luke put him in this Gospel Record to prove that the Jews who were chosen by God for Salvation would *automatically* embrace Jesus! And those who did NOT embrace Jesus were NOT chosen.

But what marks both of these people is that they were yearning and longing for the Coming of the Messiah! In verse 25 it says that Simeon was ...

... looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him.

... and Jesus, the Messiah IS the “Consolation of Israel” (vv. 26, 30).

In verse 37 it says that Anna virtually never left the Temple and was serving the Lord “*day and night with Fastings and Prayers.*”

In other words, she was like Simeon- she was *longing* for the Messiah to come. She was fasting and praying *night and day* because she was looking for “*the Redemption of Jerusalem.*” And that Redemption is Jesus!

In verse 38 she comes in at just the right Moment to see the Messiah-child, and she gives thanks to God. But then Anna spoke of Jesus,

... to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

So, God sovereignly gave a special Glimpse of the King's Glory to those two faithful saints, who were *yearning* and *longing* and *looking* for “the Redemption of Jerusalem.” And for Anna, that meant an entire Life of fasting- decade after decade- maybe as long as 60 years since her husband died!

And Dr. Luke is showing all his readers how genuinely holy and devout Jews respond to the Promise of Christ's Coming. But he also shows us how Almighty God responds to their Longings. They see more than others see. Now they may not fully understand all the Details about how the Messiah is Coming- Simeon and Anna surely did not- but God mercifully gives them a Glimpse before they die, of what they so *passionately* wanted to see!

Now here we are- we 21st Century Christians- on the other side of the King's Coming. He has already come! But He has gone away again! He has revealed His Glory! He has shed His Blood for our Sins! He has risen from the Dead! He has ascended into Heaven to sit at Father's “Right Hand” until he puts all of God’s Enemies under His Feet! And He has sent his Holy Spirit to regenerate us; sanctify us; and indwell us *continually*. And He has commissioned His Church to go; and see the Gospel triumph over the Rebellion of the Nations. And He has promised,

I will come again!

... yet He tarries!

Anna’s Hopes were based on the Promises of God- just like ours are. But O, how much MORE we have seen! How much MORE of the Messiah we know and can hope for! She never saw the Years of Jesus' Compassion and Power- moving through His people- like we have as we have read the Gospel Records. She never heard the Words of Authority and Wisdom and Love through the New Testament Books like we have. She never saw the blind receive their sight; or the lame walk; or the lepers cleansed; or the deaf hear; or the dead raised; and the poor evangelized the way Jesus did it. She never saw him consecrate Himself in

Gethsemane; or crucified for our Sakes on Golgotha. She never heard the merciful Words, "*Today you will be with me in Paradise!*" or the triumphant Words, "*It is finished!*" And she never saw him rise from the Dead- Triumphant over Sin and Death and Hell!

But we have. And now this One, whom we know so well, is gone. So, we walk by Faith and not by Sight. The One whom we love has been taken away. The Wedding Party has been broken up. It is as though the wedding March started; and we were walking down the aisle to Him; but then at the last minute the Bridegroom disappeared!

And that is painful. And so, we pray. And we mourn. And we grieve. And we fast. But should we long for Him *less* than Anna longed for Him? Does the fact that we have had Him with us for years and have His Spirit now make us long for Him *less* or *more*? O what an indictment of our Blindness if the answer is: Less.

So, I say, let us *long* for Jesus! Let us *yearn* for Him! And let us *look* for Him with MORE intensity than Anna and Simeon. Shall we have *less* Devotion than those pre-Christian saints? We have beheld His Glory- the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father. So, shall we hunger *less* for His full Appearing? I pray not. But I say to all of us- let us fast for the 2nd Coming of our dear King and savior- Jesus, the Christ!

Amen! Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

