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Quick Links to the Study

I. Context

- a. Historical
- b. Literary

II. Message

- a. A Servant Called, vv. 13-17
- b. Why Fasting? vv. 18-22

With this continuation of the study of chapters one and two in the gospel of Mark, we come to the second and third pericopes in chapter two: the calling of Levi (2:13-17) and the question about fasting (2:18-22). Both Matthew and Luke record this material as well; thus, we will look at those accounts in order to put Mark's into better focus.

I. Context

Once more, since we continue our study in Mark's gospel, the background material from previous lessons will be used here with minimal revision to accommodate the new scripture texts.

With Mark's launching of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee with a summation of its essence in 1:14-15, we have noticed the gospel writer depicting the first year of this 2 1/2 activity with a strong theme on Jesus' authority. It begins with an amazing call to four relatively wealthy and secure Galilean fishermen to pull up stakes and walk with him as students (1:16-20). Next we see Jesus, with these four -- Peter, Andrew, James and John -- in a synagogue in their home town, decisively demonstrating not only profound insights into the Hebrew Bible, but also over the world of demons (1:21-28). Next, he shows his power over physical sickness in the dramatic healing of Peter's mother-in-law (1:29-31) at the disciples' home in Capernaum. That provokes a crowd of people from that region of the northwestern shores of the Sea of Galilee to come to Peter's home seeking the help of this new Teacher (1:32-34). The next morning Jesus slips out to go pray in solitude in a nearby deserted area. When Peter finds him and wants him to return to Capernaum, Jesus instead takes the group on a preaching and healing tour of the entire province of Galilee (1:35-39). During that trip they encounter a leper, whom Jesus heals (1:40-45). In 2:1-12, they return back to Capernaum where

Jesus takes up residence in a home.

Next, along the seashore Jesus spots a Jew working for a Roman tax collector and calls Matthew to follow him (2:13-14). As an expression of appreciation Matthew throws a banquet at him home in honor of Jesus (2:15-17). Next a question arises over the issue of fasting because, although the Pharisees and the disciples of John practice the tradition, Jesus and his disciples do not (2:18-22). Thus in our passages we deal with the issues of calling and fasting from 2:13-22.

a. Historical

The **external history** of the Markan gospel focuses upon the early church tradition that placed John Mark as the composer of this document. This tradition reaching back to Papias (ca 110-130s) and, as quoted by Eusebius, (260-340 AD) places Mark in Rome in the 60s just prior to the execution of the apostle Peter. The gospel is understood to be a reflection of Peter's recollections of Jesus' life and ministry that Mark put in writing either before or just after Peter's martyrdom at the hands of the Roman emperor Nero. Modern scholarship has been cautious about accepting all aspects of this tradition, since hardly any of them can be proven objectively from corroborating evidence. Internal analysis from a narrative critical methodology provides a somewhat different perspective suggesting that the writer of this material was situated in either Galilee or north of there

possibly in Antioch. At least, the narrational vantage point places both the narrator and the reader here geographically. For example, Jesus always *comes* to Galilee in Mark, he doesn't go to Galilee. This in contrast to Luke, who places the narrator and reader in Jerusalem and thus Jesus always *goes* to Galilee.

The **internal history** of [2:13-22](#) is less easy to identify precisely. Time and place markers are more vague than in 2:1-12. Mk. 2:13 indicates merely that "Jesus went out again beside the sea; the whole crowd gathered around him,..." Then in the next verse the scene changes to "As he walked along, he saw Levi..." Next we are in Levi's (Matthew's) home and "And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house,..." From Mk. 2:1-12, one would assume that Jesus saw Levi somewhere near Capernaum after he had finished teaching the crowds of people (2:13-14a). Neither [Matthew](#) (9:1a -- "As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew...") nor [Luke](#) (5:27 -- "After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi,...") mentions the teaching of the crowds before Jesus calls Matthew to follow him. Luke's "after this" -- literally μετὰ ταῦτα ('after these things') -- reaches back to the preceding

pericope in chapter five on the healing of the paralytic (5:17-26) to merely indicate that Levi's calling happened subsequent to this healing.

The other internal history matter needing some attention is the issue about fasting in 2:18-22. Mark does not clearly indicate whether this was a part of the conversation that took place in Matthew's home during the evening meal. He indicates that some disciples of John and some Pharisees asked Jesus about the matter of fasting. In contrast, however, [Matthew](#) poses the question to Jesus from the disciples of John only: "Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?'" [Luke](#), on the other hand, sees the question coming from the Pharisees as a part of the dinner conversation that evening in Matthew's house: "Then they said to him, 'John's disciples, like the disciples of the Pharisees, frequently fast and pray, but your disciples eat and drink.'" From Lk. 5:30, Luke's 'they' is clearly the Pharisees. At minimum, Luke interpreted Mark's narrative to suggest that the fasting question was a part of the evening's activities at Matthew's home.

b. Literary

The literary context for 2:13-22 is interesting, especially in comparison to Matthew and Luke. From my outline of [the life of Christ](#), one can see the setting of our passage better.

Matthew:	Mark:	Luke:	John:
I. Background and preparation for ministry			
1:1-2:23 (4%) ²	1:1-2:52 (11%)	1:1-18 (2%)	
II. Beginning of public ministry			
3:1-4:11	1:1-13	3:1-4:14	1:19-4:54
III. Galilean ministry			
4:12-18:35 (51%)	1:14-9:50 (53%)	4:14-9:56 (24%)	4:46-7:9 (15%)
A. Phase One: To the Choosing of the Twelve			
4:12-12:21	1:15-3:19a	4:14-7:50	4:46-5:47
54. Paralytic healed and forgiven 9:1-8	10. Paralytic healed and forgiven 2:1-12	28. Paralytic healed and forgiven 5:17-26	John doesn't describe these events.
55. Calling of Matthew 9:9-13	11. Calling of Levi 2:13-17	29. Calling of Levi 5:27-32	
56. Question about fasting 9:14-17	12. Question about fasting 2:18-22	30. Question about fasting 5:33-39	
57. Ruler's daughter and a woman healed 9:18-26	13. Plucking grain on the Sabbath 2:23-28	31. Plucking grain on the Sabbath 6:1-5	

One can easily see that all three synoptic gospels are in the same sequence in the first three of the four listed pericopes above. Thus both Matthew

and Luke pick up the Markan sequence, and as we will see in the exegesis, they follow the Markan narrative rather closely without a lot of rewriting. A few

Markan narrative details that are not spelled out may be stated more directly in either Matthew or Luke as they express their interpretation of Mark.

What becomes clear is that this event (or events) took place early on in Jesus' public ministry. Literarily, this is a part of the continuing emphasis upon Jesus' authority. In these two pericopes we encounter a literary form known as a [Pronouncement Story](#). This is clearly the form in 2:15-17 and also in 2:18-22. For a clearer representation of this see the [Block Diagram](#) of the Greek text in the larger internet version of this study. [Such literary forms](#), known as *chreia* (χρεία) in ancient Greek literature, use a narrative setting to lead up to the central character uttering a profound, timeless teaching. Thus in correct interpretation, the central point of such narratives is the climatic pronouncement. Everything else should be understood in light of this basic teaching.

In our passage, before we get to the Pronounce-

ment Stories, Mark uses a couple of other literary devices in putting his material together. In Mk. 2:13, we encounter a very brief *summarizing statement* that Jesus taught a large crowd by the seashore. No details beyond that are provided. Then in 2:14, we get a very brief calling or *commissioning statement*. Such literary forms in the New Testament have their roots in the commissioning passages of the Old Testament beginning with Abraham's call to go into Palestine as recorded in [Gen. 12:1-3](#): "Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." We will treat the implications of each of these forms as a part of the interpretation of the respective passages.

II. Message

The internal literary structure of 2:13-22 can be seen in more than one way. If the evening's activities at Matthew's home includes the question about fasting, then the passage should be understood in two segments: 2:13-14 (events leading to Matthew's calling) and 2:15-22 (dinner conversation). Yet most will understand the passage to be divided differently. Matthew's calling is 2:13-17 and the question about fasting is 2:18-22. Each of these two paragraphs will be subdivided into two segments: 2:13-17 into vv. 13-14 and vv. 15-17. 2:18-22 into vv. 18-20 and vv. 21-22. The difficulty with the internal structure is the use of multiple literary forms, which aren't typically found woven together like this. We will follow the more typical pattern of a two-fold division anchored around the themes of calling and fasting.

a. A Servant Called, vv. 13-17

GNT

<2:13> Καὶ ἐξῆλθεν πάλιν παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν· καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτόν, καὶ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτούς. <2:14> καὶ παράγων εἶδεν Λευὶν τὸν τοῦ Ἀλφαίου καθήμενον ἐπὶ τὸ τελώνιον, καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ἀκολουθεῖ μοι. καὶ ἀναστὰς ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ. <2:15> Καὶ γίνεται κατακεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ, καὶ πολλοὶ τελῶναι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ συνανέκειντο τῷ Ἰησοῦ

NASB

13 And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them. 14 As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him. 15 And it happened that He was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples;

NRSV

13 Jesus went out again beside the sea; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them. 14 As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. 15 And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples—for there were

NLT

13 Then Jesus went out to the lakeshore again and taught the crowds that gathered around him. 14 As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at his tax-collection booth. "Come, be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Levi got up and followed him. 15 That night Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to be his dinner guests, along with his fellow tax collectors and many other notorious

καὶ τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· ἦσαν γὰρ πολλοὶ καὶ ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ. <2:16> καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς τῶν Φαρισαίων ἰδόντες ὅτι ἐσθίει μετὰ τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν καὶ τελωνῶν ἔλεγον τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ, "Ὅτι μετὰ τῶν τελωνῶν καὶ ἀμαρτωλῶν ἐσθίει; <2:17> καὶ ἀκούσας ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει αὐτοῖς [ὅτι] Οὐ χρειαν ἔχουσιν οἱ ἰσχύοντες ἰατροῦ ἀλλ' οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντες· οὐκ ἦλθον καλέσαι δικαίους ἀλλὰ ἀμαρτωλούς.

for there were many of them, and they were following Him. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

many who followed him. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

sinners. (There were many people of this kind among the crowds that followed Jesus.) 16 But when some of the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with people like that, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with such scum?" 17 When Jesus heard this, he told them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor – sick people do. I have come to call sinners, not those who think they are already good enough."

Notes:

Once more the Matthean and Lukan parallels are important to compare along side that of Mark, if we are to get the fuller picture of this event.

Mt. 9:9-13

9 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. 10 And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 12 But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13 Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

Right off the bat, we notice that neither Matthew nor Luke include the summarizing statement that Mark has in verse thirteen. Mark states that Jesus went out to the sea shore 'again.' The first instance of this clearly in Mark is 1:16 where Καὶ παράγων παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας... (and passing along beside the sea of Galilee...) comes close to Καὶ ἐξῆλθεν πάλιν παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν... (and he went out again

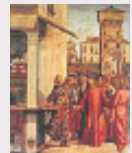
Mk. 2:13-17

13 Jesus went out again beside the sea; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them. 14 As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. 15 And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples—for there were many who followed him. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

beside the sea...) here. In both instances Jesus was near Capernaum. The first instance led to the calling of Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow him. Here the scene leads to teaching the crowd of people just prior to the calling of Matthew to discipleship. A few scholars are convinced that 'the crowd of people desiring to hear him' is the reference point and thus they see the first instance in 1:45 where the crowds

Lk. 5:27-32

27 After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." 28 And he got up, left everything, and followed him. 29 Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table with them. 30 The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" 31 Jesus answered, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; 32 I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance."



grew so great that he had trouble entering Capernaum. This walk, if happening quickly after the healing of the paralytic in 2:1-12, presented Jesus with an opportunity to move from Peter's house to the sea shore for a brief respite from the pressures of controversy with the religious leaders. But, as generally was the case



early on in his Galilean ministry, crowds of people tagged along wherever he went. And Jesus graciously accommodated their desires to hear what he had to say.

Mark says that Jesus “was teaching them” (ἐδίδασκεν αὐτούς). The nature of the Greek verb construction (Imperfect Tense) stresses ongoing action, rather than a momentary event. He was there some time giving them instruction on the nature of the Kingdom of God and their obligation to it (cf. 1:14-15). In Mark’s gospel, Jesus teaching others is a frequent characterization: for instances of this exact Greek verb (ἐδίδασκεν) see 1:21; 2:13; 4:2; 9:31; 10:1; and 11:17. Mark 10:1b is very instructive: “And crowds again gathered around him; and, as was his custom, he again taught them.” But a survey of these verses just in Mark indicate places where he taught (synagogues; outdoors; sea shores) and some of the ways he taught (e.g., in parables etc.), whom he taught (crowds and the Twelve) and a few topics that expanded the core emphasis in 1:14-15.

All of this points to the reality that Jesus was first and foremost a religious teacher who traveled the countryside communicating his beliefs to whomever would take time to listen to him. This is a very different portrait than that painted of him in the apocryphal [Gospel of Thomas](#) where Jesus stays put in semi-isolation and utters his ideas in a regal fashion to others who can’t wait to pass them on.

One implication of this for us today is that our religion should be a teaching religion. That is, we need to put strong emphasis upon communicating the basic truths of Christianity to others. We, of course, need transforming religious experience in conversion and developing discipleship. But also important is the teaching of Christian values and beliefs to everyone who will listen. Preaching, as typically defined in modern American Protestant tradi-

tion, will not get the job done in an adequate manner. It simply lacks the theological and biblical content to impact the world to the level that Jesus’ teaching ministry did. It is too geared to entertaining the listeners and too little oriented to communicating biblical content. From what I have observed in thirty plus years

of teaching either at the seminary or university level, our Sunday School is not getting the job done either. I’ve seen droves of young people who have been in Baptist Sunday Schools since birth come through my classes who are more biblically illiterate than some of the Buddhist, Hindu and Jewish students studying Old or New Testament survey with me. If nothing else, this summary declaration of Mark calls for serious re-thinking about the teaching ministry of contemporary Christianity, especially at the local church level.

The next emphasis in this passage is on Matthew’s call to discipleship by Jesus in verse fourteen: “As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, ‘Follow me.’ And he got up and followed him” (καὶ παράγων εἶδεν Λεὺν τὸν τοῦ Ἀλφαίου καθήμενον ἐπὶ τὸ τελώνιον, καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ἀκολουθεῖ μοι. καὶ ἀναστὰς ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ). The name of the individual varies. In Mark and Luke, he is called ‘Levi’ and Mark adds “the son of Alphaeus.” But in Matthew he is identified only as ‘Matthew.’ R.T. France in the New International Greek Testament Commentary provides a helpful explanation of these two names:

It is usually assumed that Λεὺι (Mark and Luke) is an alternative name for Μαθθαῖος (Matthew), and that this individual is therefore the same who appears under the name Μαθθαῖος in all the lists of the Twelve (and is at that point also identified as a τελώνης, Mt. 10:3). It would not be unusual for a person to have two names, whether both Semitic (Σίμων / Πέτρος) or one Semitic and one Greek (Θῶμας / Δίδυμος). It is therefore not necessary to assume that an otherwise unknown man named Levi has been arbitrarily identified with Matthew by the first evangelist.

In Mark’s listing, Matthew’s father is named, Alphaeus. In [the four instances](#) where Alphaeus is mentioned in the gospels, he is listed as the father

of James in three of them. Some have speculated that Matthew and James were brothers, but no evidence exists pointing this direction. And this is highly unlikely.

Matthew is identified as a tax-collector (τελώνης) who was sitting at his office (τὸ τελώνιον) along side the Sea of Galilee in Capernaum. Eugene Nida and Robert Bratcher (*Mark*, in the *Translator's Handbook*) explain this to Bible translators very helpfully:

The tax office is 'where they received taxes' (or 'customs'). This does not refer to the collection of personal taxes on wealth, but to the collection of customs on produce being transported to or through Capernaum. The equivalent of this type of tax in many communities are the levies imposed on merchants or farmers from surrounding regions who come into a market town to sell their wares or produce.

R.C. Trench (*Mark*, *NIGTC*) adds the following:

The τελώνης was not a collector of the poll tax mentioned in 12:14, which was a direct Roman tax levied in Judea since A.D. 6. In Galilee, which was not yet under direct Roman rule, a variety of taxes were levied by Antipas, prominent among which were customs charged on goods in transit. It is probable that Levi was a local customs officer, perhaps working for a more powerful middleman who would be responsible to Antipas for the provincial customs revenue. The mention of πολλοὶ τελῶναι at his house (v. 15) suggests that he did not work alone, so that his abandonment of the τελώνιον did not necessarily leave it unguarded.

Important for this text are the implications of Matthew's job as a tax-collector. J.R. Edwards in the *Pillar New Testament Commentary* on Mark makes the following observations:

It is not surprising that Jesus encounters **tax collectors** in Capernaum, a border town to neighboring Gaulanitis. The Mishnah describes tax collectors making daily rounds, "exact[ing] payment of men with or without their consent," or, as here, sitting at tax stands with account books open and pen in hand (*m. Avot* 3:16). Travelers arriving in Capernaum from the territory of Herod Philip and the Decapolis to the east and north would be taxed by agents such as Levi, who were in the service of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. The



Roman tax system was complex and varied, even in a small country like Palestine. Land and poll taxes were collected directly by the Romans, but taxes on transported goods were contracted out to local collectors, most of whom were ethnic Jews but probably not observant Jews, since Torah-conscious Jews could not be expected to transact business with Gentiles. Levi was one of these middlemen (or in the service of one) who made bids in advance to collect taxes in a given area. His own profit came from what he could mulct from his constituents, and a portion of

his receipts stayed in his own pockets. The Roman system of taxation depended on graft and greed, and it attracted enterprising individuals who were not adverse to such means.

Tax collectors were obviously despised and hated. Anyone who is familiar with "moles" and informants in Nazi and Communist regimes will have an appreciation for the loathing that first-century Jews felt for tax collectors. The Mishnah and Talmud (although written later) register scathing judgments of tax collectors, lumping them together with thieves and murderers. A Jew who collected taxes was disqualified as a judge or witness in court, expelled from the synagogue, and a cause of disgrace to his family (*b. Sanh.* 25b). The touch of a tax collector rendered a house unclean (*m. Teh.* 7:6; *m. Hag.* 3:6). Jews were forbidden to receive money and even alms from tax collectors since revenue from taxes was deemed robbery. Jewish contempt of tax collectors is epitomized in the ruling that Jews could lie to tax collectors with impunity (*m. Ned.* 3:4) — a ruling, incidentally, with which both the houses of Hillel and Shammai (who normally stood poles apart) agreed. Tax collectors were tangible reminders of Roman domination, detested alike for its injustice and Gentile uncleanness. Not a few Jewish extremists, including one among Jesus' own disciples (3:18), considered submission to the Roman yoke, as well as its system of taxation (see 12:13–17), an act of treason to God.

Thus, Jesus' call to Matthew represents a deliberate act to reach out to those on the outer edges of Jewish religious life. By calling the tax collector, he symbolically asserted that the Kingdom of God is for all, whether respectable or not by typical religious norms of the day.

Interestingly, this second call passage follows after the earlier calling of the four fishermen brothers, Peter and Andrew, along with James and John, in [1:16-20](#). No other account of the calling of the remaining seven of the Twelve disciples will be given. They just show up as a group in [Mk. 3:13-19](#) and are listed by name. This account of naming the Twelve in the three gospels brings to a close the first segment of public ministry in Galilee.

Unique to this second call pericope, Mark devotes more space to the dinner that Matthew gave in honor of Jesus (vv. 15-17), than he does to Matthew's call itself (v. 14). The other synoptic writers follow the same pattern.

In the ancient world, hospitality to friends was very significant. One important way of showing this was by given a banquet in honor of your friend or friends. The New Bible Dictionary ("Hospitality") provides a summary of the New Testament pattern:

The Gk. terms used are *philoxenia* (lit. 'love of strangers'), cf. *xenizô*, 'to receive as a guest', also *synagô* (Mt. 25:35ff.) and *lambanô* (3 Jn. 8).

Many aspects of OT hospitality reappear in the NT. The courtesies of providing water for a guest's feet and oil for his head continue, though the NT also mentions a kiss of welcome and guests reclining at a meal (Lk. 7:44ff.). In fact, Simon the Pharisee's home appears to have been an open house, judging by the way in which the presence of the woman who anointed Jesus was unconsciously accepted (Lk. 7:37ff.).

A special responsibility towards God's servants is also evident, and Jesus' earthly ministry (Mk. 1:29ff.; 2:15ff.; Lk. 7:36ff.; 10:38-41) and the apostles' missionary labours (Acts 10:6ff.; 16:15; 17:7) were greatly dependent on the hospitality they received. The NT develops this by regarding the giving or refusing of hospitality to Jesus and his followers as an indication of one's acceptance or rejection of the gospel (Mt. 10:9; Lk. 10:4), even at the final judgment (Mt. 25:34-46). These Christian responsibilities, however, are no more than a pale reflection of divine generosity. Jesus both spoke of the parable of the Great Supper (Mt. 22:2ff.; Lk. 14:16ff.) and gave the disciples an example to follow (Jn. 13:1ff.). Above all, he took the obligations of hospitality to the extreme by laying down his life to redeem his guests (Mk. 10:45; 14:22ff.).

The NT letters specifically command the provision of hospitality for fellow believers (e.g. Gal. 6:10). The existence of certain special factors in the 1st century AD emphasized the importance of these instructions. Persecution led to Christians being scattered and driven from their homes, and in many cases there was doubtless very real material need (Acts 8:1; 11:19). Itinerant preachers were also a charge upon the church. They received nothing from the pagan world (3 Jn. 7),

and therefore became the responsibility of local Christians (Acts 9:43; 16:15; 18:3, 7), even though risks might be involved (Acts 17:5-9). Sometimes the hosts would be the evangelists' own converts (3 Jn. 5-7). False teachers, however, were to be turned away (2 Jn. 10), and letters of recommendation served to identify genuine cases (Rom. 16:1; 2 Cor. 3:1). Many inns of the time were also of low standard, both materially and morally, and the Christian traveller would often have found them unattractive.

The 'pursuit' of hospitality (Rom. 12:13) was obligatory for the Christian, who must ensure that the needs of fellow believers were properly met, though hospitality was to be offered to all (Rom. 12:13-14; Gal. 6:10). Thus Paul instructs the Colossian church to receive Mark (Col. 4:10), and assumes that Philemon will prepare a room for Paul when he is released from prison (Phm. 22). The duty of providing hospitality was also one of the special qualifications of a *BISHOP (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8), and of a *WIDOW requiring support from the church (1 Tim. 5:10).

Although hospitality was a mark of civilization for the Greeks, and the NT contains an excellent example of non-Christian generosity (Acts 28:7), hospitality in the NT had a specifically Christian character. It was to be offered freely, without grudging (1 Pet. 4:9) and in a spirit of brotherly love (Heb. 13:1). Such love (*agapâ*: 1 Pet. 4:8; cf. Rom. 12:9) is essentially outward-looking, issuing in a readiness to provide for the needs of others, and could be demonstrated only because the giver had received a gift (*charisma*) from God (1 Pet. 4:10-11). The care of others was therefore the discharge of a debt of gratitude.

One particularly important aspect of the evening meal was the manner of eating. Since everything, both solid food



and liquids, would be taken and eaten or drunk from common dishes, highly religious Jewish people in that time would be extremely cautious as to who would be invited to dine. Ritual purity laws had to be maintained at all costs in order to worship God. Table fellowship with ritually impure individuals risked serious religious problems.

Another different custom in that society from ours is the manner in which banquets would be held. Traditions of privacy like in our culture virtually didn't exist in that world. With larger homes containing interior courts where evening meals would typically be held, lots of people could attend a meal. But only the invited guests were allowed to sit -- or recline -- and eat the food. Uninvited guests could freely watch and often engage the guests in conversation, but

not eat. Customary on many occasions when the banquet was held in honor of a particular individual, an important part of the evening's activity would be conversation with this individual with first the invited guests, and also with other individuals present. If the individual were a philosopher or rabbi, he would typically use the occasion to espouse his ideas, and to answer questions about aspects of his beliefs.

The depiction of Matthew's dinner in honor of Jesus in all three gospels suggests the normal pattern described above.

The very unusual aspect is 'who was invited' and 'who was present but not invited' and thus not eligible to eat. Those invited and who sat down to eat with Jesus are described as "many tax collectors and sinners" (πολλοὶ τελῶναι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ). The tax collector we already understand. Matthew simply invited his fellow tax collectors to the meal. Probably the second designation refers to another group, although it could be but a different characterization of the tax collectors. Bratcher-Nida (TH) have a helpful description of this term:

There is widespread agreement that 'sinners' were people in general who were not so careful in their observance of the Law, especially with regard to dietary laws, as were the Pharisees. "The *am ha-'arets* (people of the land) who are sinners, not because they transgress the law, but because they do not hold the Pharisaic interpretation of it" (K. Grayston, Richardson's *Word Book*, article "Sin"). Cf. the discussion in *Goodspeed Problems*, 28f., who translates "irreligious people" (cf. Rawlinson, Turner, Taylor).

This phrase "tax collectors and sinners" (τελῶναι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ) occurs some eight times in the synoptic gospels. Each time the idea of sinners is the same; a reference to the *am ha-'arets*, who didn't pay attention to the religious legalism of the Pharisees. The ritual impurity of these two groups of people would have been unquestionable. Thus any genuine religious person would have adamantly refused table fellowship with them!

The 'uninvited but present individuals' are identified as "scribes of the Pharisees" (οἱ γραμματεῖς τῶν Φαρισαίων) in Mark; as "Pharisees and their scribes" (οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς αὐτῶν) in Luke, and as "Pharisees" (οἱ Φαρισαῖοι) in Matthew. Jewish scribes were specialists in interpreting the Torah by this point in time. Most, but not all, were aligned with the Pharisees in their belief system.



When the opportune moment in the evening's festivities arose, they posed their complaint to Jesus' disciples: "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?" But the disciples do not answer their question. Instead, Jesus himself does.

And his answer is in the form of an axiom, or proverb, which stands as an abbreviated form of what the NT calls a parable (παραβολή): "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." The wording of the proverb in all three gospels is virtually the same, except that Luke uses a different verb tense of 'come' and adds "to repentance" at the end. Three keys terms need explaining in this expression. 'Call'; 'righteous'; and 'sinners'. Also one should note the parallelism inherent to the saying:

not those who are healthy who need a physician,	}
but those who are sick	
I did not come to call the righteous,	
but sinners	

The meaning of 'sinners' and 'righteous' should be taken from the immediate context of the Pharisees and those being labeled 'tax collectors and sinners.' Jesus' mission is to call such into the Kingdom of God. The Pharisees exclude them and build walls of separation to keep them outside religion. Jesus came to offer the Kingdom to such individuals when they would reach out to him. Thus, the dinner at Matthew's house reflects the new found commitment of the tax collector to leave all and follow Jesus.

As a Pronouncement Story, this declaration of Jesus stands as the climatic, pivotal part of the passage. It places the religious value system of Jesus in direct contrast to that of the Pharisees. The holiness of God, affirmed by the Pharisees, is not denied by Jesus. But that holiness is no basis religious for elitism. And it must not negate the compassion of a holy God for reclaiming the lost sinner. Rather, as Jesus' words and actions demonstrate, it should push us harder to reclaim the lost sinner. Luke's version, "I have come to call...sinners to repentance," makes this all the clearer. Also as J. R. Edwards reminds us (PNTC), "This verse was remembered and preserved in a number of early Christian sources, including Clement of Rome (2 Clem. 2:4), the *Didache* (4:10), the *Epistle of Barnabas* (5:9), and Justin Martyr (*Apol.* 1.15.8). The saying is a defense of Jesus' outreach to the disreputable, not a suggestion that there are some who are exempt from his call."

b. Why Fasting? vv. 18-22

GNT

«2:18» Καὶ ἦσαν οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι νηστεύοντες. καὶ ἔρχονται καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, Διὰ τί οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ τῶν Φαρισαίων νηστεύουσιν, οἱ δὲ σοὶ μαθηταὶ οὐ νηστεύουσιν; «2:19» καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Μὴ δύνανται οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος ἐν ᾧ ὁ νυμφίος μετ' αὐτῶν ἐστὶν νηστεύειν; ὅσον χρόνον ἔχουσιν τὸν νυμφίον μετ' αὐτῶν οὐ δύνανται νηστεύειν. «2:20» ἐλεύσονται δὲ ἡμέραι ὅταν ἀπαρθῇ ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὁ νυμφίος, καὶ τότε νηστεύουσιν ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ.

«2:21» οὐδεὶς ἐπίβλημα ῥάκους ἀγνάφου ἐπιράπτει ἐπὶ ἱμάτιον παλαιόν· εἰ δὲ μή, αἶρει τὸ πλήρωμα ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ καινὸν τοῦ παλαιοῦ καὶ χεῖρον σχίσμα γίνεται. «2:22» καὶ οὐδεὶς βάλλει οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς παλαιούς· εἰ δὲ μή, ῥήξει ὁ οἶνος τοὺς ἀσκοὺς καὶ ὁ οἶνος ἀπόλλυται καὶ οἱ ἀσκοί· ἀλλὰ οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς καινοὺς.

NASB

18 John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" 19 And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. 22 No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

NRSV

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.

21 "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

NLT

18 John's disciples and the Pharisees sometimes fasted. One day some people came to Jesus and asked, "Why do John's disciples and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples don't fast?" 19 Jesus replied, "Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. They can't fast while they are with the groom. 20 But someday he will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

21 "And who would patch an old garment with unshrunk cloth? For the new patch shrinks and pulls away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger hole than before. 22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. The wine would burst the wineskins, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. New wine needs new wineskins."

Notes:

Once more, having all three gospel accounts on the table helps us better understand Mark's perspective on this part of the biblical text.

Mt. 9:14-17

14 Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" 15 And Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will

Mark 2:18-22

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the

Lk 5:33-39

33 Then they said to him, "John's disciples, like the disciples of the Pharisees, frequently fast and pray, but your disciples eat and drink." 34 Jesus said to them, "You cannot make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? 35 The

come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. 16 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made.

17 "Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."

bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.

21 "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

days will come when the bridegroom will be 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 sews it on an old garment; otherwise the new will be torn, and the piece from the new will not match the old.

37" And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and 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 wine, but says, "The old is good.' "

One observation that surfaces immediately is the different way this material is introduced by each gospel writer. In Mark and Matthew, this material seems somewhat detached from the dinner conversation at Matthew's house, but Luke clearly ties it to that event as a continuation of the discussion. Additionally, the matter of who poses the issue is set differently. In Matthew, some disciples of John pose the question to Jesus. Mark leaves it as a generic "people" posing the question. Luke's "they" contextually links the question back to the Pharisees posing the question.

But the content of the pericopes is essentially the same, as well as the thought structure. The issue of fasting by the Pharisees (Matthew) or the Pharisees and John's disciples (Mark & Luke) in contrast to the non-fasting by Jesus' disciples is set before Jesus for his response. His response is three-fold: 1) the wedding feast image; 2) patching cloth; 3) new wine in old wineskins. The metaphorical language used is graphic and plays against everyday life customs in that world.

The nature of the issue of [fasting](#) needs exploring, since this is not widely practiced by Christians today. J.R. Edwards (Mark, PNTC) summarizes the Jewish practice:

The three main pillars of Judaism were prayer, almsgiving, and fasting. Judaism required but one fast on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*, Lev 16:29–30; *m. Yomab* 8:1–2). But the Mishnah tractate *Ta'anit*, which is devoted to proper observances of fasting, specifies at least three other types of fasts. One type was fasts that lamented national tragedies, such as the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar (Zech 7:3–4; 8:19); another was fasts in times of crises, such as war, plague, drought, and famine; and a third type was self-imposed fasts for any number of personal reasons (2 Sam 12:16; Ps 35:13). The Pharisees normally fasted

on Mondays and Thursdays (*Did.* 8:1; *b. Ta'an.* 12a), although this was not required. The required fast on the Day of Atonement lasted a full twenty-four hours, whereas voluntary fasts as a rule extended only from dawn to dusk. Although not a legal requirement except in one instance, fasting had become in Jesus' day a prerequisite of religious commitment, a sign of atonement of sin and humiliation and penitence before God, and a general aid to prayer. The rabbis often referred to fasting as "an affliction of the soul," thereby designating it as a characteristic and sacrificial act of piety.

One important note is that the Judaism of Jesus' day had institutionalized the practice with set times and structures. The OT practice was more spontaneous and designed to meet spiritual needs arising in the moment. Jesus' more detailed teaching on this topic in [Mt. 6:16-18](#) calls for a return to the OT practice with focus upon God and away from religious show to impress others.

The thrust of Jesus' response in Mark 2:18-23 is that his disciples do not fast because it is not time to fast -- yet. Entrance into the Kingdom of God is compared to attending a wedding feast in that day. This was a time of great festivity and joy, not a time of somber reflection. His disciples are compared to the groom's wedding party with Jesus as the groom. However, a day will come when the groom is no longer present with them, and then fasting will become appropriate. The language used by Jesus in Mark's depiction is especially insightful, as Robert Guelich (*Mark in the Word Biblical Commentary*) points out:

At this point the allegorical application of the



bridegroom to Jesus becomes obvious through the allusion to his “removal.” First, in Jewish wedding custom the guests leave rather than the bridegroom. Consequently, the idea of the bridegroom being removed from the wedding scene comes as a jarring surprise. Second, this verb (ἀπαίρειν) simply mentions the “removal” of the bridegroom. But it may imply the use of



force and may be an echo of a similar use of the verb in Isa 53:8 to refer to Jesus’ death (Taylor, 211; Lohmeyer, 60). The motif of Jesus’ death actually fits the larger conflict context (cf. 3:6) and would, therefore, be the first

passion prediction in Mark. Furthermore, death, funeral and mourning would form a sharp contrast to bridegroom, wedding and joyous celebration, the very contrast at issue in 2:19, 20.

The second and third metaphors make pretty much the same point: the radicalness of Jesus’ teaching on the Kingdom will not fit into the Pharisee’s understanding. To try to make it fit is comparable to trying to patch clothes with new, unshrunk cloth, or trying to use old wineskins to store new wine. The central point is clear. Becoming a disciple of Jesus as a point of entrance into God’s rule and reign is a brand new concept that stands in unreconcilable tension with the traditional Judaism taught by the scribes and Pharisees. Thus, Jesus’ disciples did not fast in the manner of the Pharisees, nor even as the disciples of John. When the day would come that fasting would be appropriate, the nature and motivation for fasting would be radically different than the practice familiar to the people at the dinner in Matthew’s home.



The sad reality, however, is that later Christianity, beginning in the second Christian century, made the same mistakes about fasting that the Pharisees had made. It was institutionalized and structured so that it took on the ‘for show’ tone rather than being a personal issue of focus upon God and His leadership and presence. As one of the Church Fathers [discusses](#), Christians just shifted the two days to Wednesdays and Fridays to avoid confusion with the Jewish pattern. Spiritual reward became a sig-

nificant motivation, rather than spiritual reflection.

The possible applications of these verses to our day are numerous. For one thing, the issue of the relevancy of fasting to Christians today arises from this text. To be sure, we live in

the time after the bridegroom has been taken, that is alluded to in 2:20. The Greek [verb](#) for ‘fasting’ (νηστεύω) shows up 20 times in the NT with 18 of them in the synoptic gospels, and the [noun](#) νηστεία is used 3 times with the meaning of “fasting”: 2 in the gospels, and 1 in Acts. The gospels reflect the perspective that we’ve covered above. Acts 13:2-3 and 14:23 provide some additional insight into how early Christians interpreted Jesus’ teaching on this topic.

Acts 13:1-3: 1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the ruler, and Saul. 2 While they were worshipping the Lord and **fasting** (νηστεύω), the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then after **fasting** (νηστεύω) and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Here fasting is linked to both worshipping and praying, and is a part of the Christian community at Antioch’s intensive searching for God’s leadership and blessing in launching Paul and Baranabas on the first missionary journey.

Acts 14:23. And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting (νηστεία) they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.

Once more Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey use prayer and fasting as a way to seek God’s presence and leadership upon the new leaders of the newly established churches. It also is a part of the selection process for these leaders. Interestingly, Paul never discusses the practice in his writings, nor is it found in any of the other letters of the NT. Yet, from the beginning of the second century with the Apostolic Fathers onward, fasting becomes an increasingly larger topic of discussion and widespread practice.

What can we conclude? Early Christians implemented Jesus’ teaching that renewed the OT pattern of using fasting on some occasions where God’s leadership and presence was sought. But it retained its OT spontaneity, and was not institutionalized. It remained a part of the seeking of God that included prayer and worship, but never substituted for them.

GNT

<2:13> Καὶ ἐξῆλθεν πάλιν παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν· καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτόν, καὶ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτούς. <2:14> καὶ παράγων εἶδεν Λευὶν τὸν τοῦ Ἀλφαίου καθήμενον ἐπὶ τὸ τελώνιον, καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ἀκολουθεῖ μοι. καὶ ἀναστὰς ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ. <2:15> Καὶ γίνεται κατακεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ, καὶ πολλοὶ τελῶναι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ συνανέκειντο τῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· ἦσαν γὰρ πολλοὶ καὶ ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ. <2:16> καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς τῶν Φαρισαίων ἰδόντες ὅτι ἐσθίει μετὰ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν καὶ τελωνῶν ἔλεγον τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ, "Ὅτι μετὰ τῶν τελωνῶν καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν ἐσθίει; <2:17> καὶ ἀκούσας ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει αὐτοῖς [ὅτι] Οὐ χρειᾶν ἔχουσιν οἱ ἰσχύοντες ἰατροῦ ἀλλ' οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντες· οὐκ ἦλθον καλέσαι δικαίους ἀλλὰ ἁμαρτωλούς.

<2:18> Καὶ ἦσαν οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι νηστεύοντες, καὶ ἔρχονται καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, Διὰ τί οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ τῶν Φαρισαίων νηστεύουσιν, οἱ δὲ σοὶ μαθηταὶ οὐ νηστεύουσιν; <2:19> καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Μὴ δύνανται οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος ἐν ᾧ ὁ νυμφίος μετ' αὐτῶν ἐστὶν νηστεύειν; ὅσον χρόνον ἔχουσιν τὸν

NASB

13 And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them. 14 As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him. 15 And it happened that He was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

18 John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" 19 And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they

NRSV

13 Jesus went out again beside the sea; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them. 14 As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. 15 And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples—for there were many who followed him. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken

NLT

13 Then Jesus went out to the lakeshore again and taught the crowds that gathered around him. 14 As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at his tax-collection booth. "Come, be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Levi got up and followed him. 15 That night Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to be his dinner guests, along with his fellow tax collectors and many other notorious sinners. (There were many people of this kind among the crowds that followed Jesus.) 16 But when some of the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with people like that, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with such scum?" 17 When Jesus heard this, he told them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor – sick people do. I have come to call sinners, not those who think they are already good enough."

18 John's disciples and the Pharisees sometimes fasted. One day some people came to Jesus and asked, "Why do John's disciples and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples don't fast?" 19 Jesus replied, "Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. They can't fast while they are with the groom. 20

νυμφίον μετ' αὐτῶν οὐ
δύνανται νηστεύειν.
<2:20> ἐλεύσονται δὲ
ἡμέραι ὅταν ἀπαρθῇ ἀπ'
αὐτῶν ὁ νυμφίος, καὶ τότε
νηστεύουσιν ἐν ἐκείνῃ
τῇ ἡμέρᾳ.

<2:21> οὐδεὶς
ἐπίβλημα ῥάκους
ἀγνάφου ἐπιράπτει ἐπὶ
ἱμάτιον παλαιόν· εἰ δὲ μή,
αἶρει τὸ πλήρωμα ἀπ'
αὐτοῦ τὸ καινὸν τοῦ
παλαιοῦ καὶ χειρόν
σχίσμα γίνεται. <2:22>
καὶ οὐδεὶς βάλλει οἶνον
νέον εἰς ἀσκούς
παλαιούς· εἰ δὲ μή, ῥήξει
ὁ οἶνος τοὺς ἀσκούς καὶ
ὁ οἶνος ἀπόλλυται καὶ οἱ
ἀσκοί· ἀλλὰ οἶνον νέον
εἰς ἀσκούς καινούς.

cannot fast. 20 But the
days will come when the
bridegroom is taken
away from them, and
then they will fast in that
day.

21 "No one sews a
patch of unshrunk cloth
on an old garment; oth-
erwise the patch pulls
away from it, the new
from the old, and a worse
tear results. 22 No one
puts new wine into old
wineskins; otherwise the
wine will burst the skins,
and the wine is lost and
the skins as well; but one
puts new wine into fresh
wineskins."

away from them, and
then they will fast on that
day.

21 "No one sews a
piece of unshrunk cloth
on an old cloak; oth-
erwise, the patch pulls
away from it, the new
from the old, and a worse
tear is made. 22 And no
one puts new wine into
old wineskins; otherwise,
the wine will burst the
skins, and the wine is
lost, and so are the
skins; but one puts new
wine into fresh wine-
skins."

But someday he will be
taken away from them,
and then they will fast.

21 "And who would
patch an old garment
with unshrunk cloth? For
the new patch shrinks
and pulls away from the
old cloth, leaving an even
bigger hole than before.
22 And no one puts new
wine into old wineskins.
The wine would burst the
wineskins, spilling the
wine and ruining the
skins. New wine needs
new wineskins."

GNT

«9:9» Καὶ παράγων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐκεῖθεν εἶδεν ἄνθρωπον καθήμενον ἐπὶ τὸ τελώνιον, Μαθθαῖον λεγόμενον, καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ἀκολουθεῖ μοι. καὶ ἀναστὰς ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ. «9:10» Καὶ ἐγένετο αὐτοῦ ἀνακειμένου ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ, καὶ ἰδοὺ πολλοὶ τελῶναι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἐλθόντες συνανέκειντο τῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ. «9:11» καὶ ἰδόντες οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ἔλεγον τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ, Διὰ τί μετὰ τῶν τελωνῶν καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν ἐσθίει ὁ διδάσκαλος ὑμῶν; «9:12» ὁ δὲ ἀκούσας εἶπεν, Οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχουσιν οἱ ἰσχύοντες ἰατροῦ ἀλλ' οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντες. «9:13» πορευθέντες δὲ μάθετε τί ἐστίν, Ἐλεος θέλω καὶ οὐ θυσίαν· οὐ γὰρ ἦλθον καλέσαι δικαίους ἀλλὰ ἁμαρτωλοὺς.

«9:14» Τότε προσέρχονται αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου λέγοντες, Διὰ τί ἡμεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι νηστεύομεν [πολλά], οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ σου οὐ νηστεύουσιν; «9:15» καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Μὴ δύνανται οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος πενθεῖν ἐφ' ὅσον μετ' αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ὁ νυμφίος; ἐλεύσονται δὲ ἡμέραι ὅταν ἀπαρθῇ ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὁ νυμφίος, καὶ τότε νηστεύουσιν. «9:16» οὐδεὶς δὲ ἐπιβάλλει ἐπίβλημα ῥάκους ἀγνάφου ἐπὶ ἱματίῳ παλαιῷ· αἶρει γὰρ τὸ

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9 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. 10 And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 12 But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13 Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

14 Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" 15 And Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. 16 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made. 17 Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; other-

GNT

«5:27» Καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἐξῆλθεν καὶ ἐθεάσατο τελώνην ὀνόματι Λευὶν καθήμενον ἐπὶ τὸ τελώνιον, καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ἀκολουθεῖ μοι. 5:28 καὶ καταλιπὼν πάντα ἀναστὰς ἠκολούθει αὐτῷ. 5:29 Καὶ ἐποίησεν δοχὴν μεγάλην Λευὶς αὐτῷ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἦν ὄχλος πολὺς τελωνῶν καὶ ἄλλων οἱ ἦσαν μετ' αὐτῶν κατακείμενοι. 5:30 καὶ ἐγόγγυζον οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς αὐτῶν πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ λέγοντες, Διὰ τί μετὰ τῶν τελωνῶν καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν ἐσθίετε καὶ πίνετε; 5:31 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς, Οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχουσιν οἱ ὑγιαίνοντες ἰατροῦ ἀλλὰ οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντες· 5:32 οὐκ ἐλήλυθα καλέσαι δικαίους ἀλλὰ ἁμαρτωλοὺς εἰς μετάνοιαν.

5:33 Οἱ δὲ εἶπαν πρὸς αὐτόν, Οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου νηστεύουσιν πυκνὰ καὶ δεήσεις ποιοῦνται ὁμοίως καὶ οἱ τῶν Φαρισαίων, οἱ δὲ σοὶ ἐσθίουσιν καὶ πίνουσιν. 5:34 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς, Μὴ δύνασθε τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ νυμφῶνος ἐν ᾧ ὁ νυμφίος μετ' αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ποιῆσαι νηστεῦσαι; 5:35 ἐλεύσονται δὲ ἡμέραι, καὶ ὅταν ἀπαρθῇ ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὁ νυμφίος, τότε νηστεύουσιν ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις. 5:36 Ἐλεγεν δὲ καὶ παραβολὴν πρὸς αὐτοὺς

NRSV

27 After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." 28 And he got up, left everything, and followed him. 29 Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table with them. 30 The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" 31 Jesus answered, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; 32 I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance."

33 Then they said to him, "John's disciples, like the disciples of the Pharisees, frequently fast and pray, but your disciples eat and drink." 34 Jesus said to them, "You cannot make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? 35 The days will come when the bridegroom will be 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 sews it on an old garment; otherwise the new will be torn, and the piece from the new will not match the old. 37

πλήρωμα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱματίου καὶ χεῖρον σχίσμα γίνεται. <9:17> οὐδὲ βάλλουσιν οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς παλαιούς· εἰ δὲ μή γε, ρήγνυνται οἱ ἀσκοὶ καὶ ὁ οἶνος ἐκχεῖται καὶ οἱ ἀσκοὶ ἀπόλλυνται ἀλλὰ βάλλουσιν οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς καινούς, καὶ ἀμφοτέρωτεροι συντηροῦνται.

wise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."

ὅτι Οὐδεὶς ἐπίβλημα ἀπὸ ἱματίου καινοῦ σχίσας ἐπιβάλλει ἐπὶ ἱμάτιον παλαιόν· εἰ δὲ μή γε, καὶ τὸ καινὸν σχίσει καὶ τῷ παλαιῷ οὐ συμφωνήσει τὸ ἐπίβλημα τὸ ἀπὸ τοῦ καινοῦ. 5:37 καὶ οὐδεὶς βάλλει οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς παλαιούς· εἰ δὲ μή γε, ρήξει ὁ οἶνος ὁ νέος τοὺς ἀσκοὺς καὶ αὐτὸς ἐκχυθήσεται καὶ οἱ ἀσκοὶ ἀπολοῦνται· 5:38 ἀλλὰ οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς καινοὺς βλητέον. 5:39 [καὶ] οὐδεὶς πιὼν παλαιὸν θέλει νέον· λέγει γάρ, 'Ὁ παλαιὸς χρηστός ἐστίν.

And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and 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 wine, but says, "The old is good.' "

GNT Diagram

2:13

1 Καὶ
ἐξῆλθεν
πάλιν
παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν·
καὶ
2 πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἤρχετο
πρὸς αὐτόν,
καὶ
3 ἐδίδασκεν αὐτούς.

2:14

4 καὶ
παράγων
εἶδεν Λευὶν
τὸν τοῦ Ἀλφαίου
καθήμενον
ἐπὶ τὸ τελώνιον,
καὶ
5 λέγει αὐτῷ,
α Ἀκολούθει μοι.

6 καὶ
ἀναστὰς
ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ.

2:15

7 Καὶ
γίνεται
κατακεῖσθαι αὐτὸν
ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ,
καὶ
8 πολλοὶ τελῶναι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ συναγέκειντο
τῷ Ἰησοῦ
καὶ
τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ·
γὰρ
9 ἦσαν πολλοὶ
καὶ
10 ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ.

2:16

καὶ
ιδόντες
ὅτι ἐσθίει
μετὰ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν
καὶ
τελωνῶν
11 οἱ γραμματεῖς τῶν Φαρισαίων...ἔλεγον τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ,
β
μετὰ τῶν τελωνῶν
καὶ
ἁμαρτωλῶν
Ὅτι...ἐσθίει;

2:17

καὶ

ἀκούσας

12 ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει αὐτοῖς

γ

[ὅτι] Οὐ χρειαν ἔχουσιν οἱ ισχύοντες ἰατροῦ

ἀλλ'

δ

οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντες·

ε

οὐκ ἦλθον καλέσαι δικαίους

ζ

ἀλλὰ

----- ἀμαρτωλούς.

2:18

Καὶ

13 ἦσαν οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι νηστεύοντες.

καὶ

14 ἔρχονται

καὶ

15 λέγουσιν αὐτῷ,

ι

Διὰ τί οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου

καὶ

οἱ μαθηταὶ τῶν Φαρισαίων νηστεύουσιν,

δὲ

θ

--- -- οἱ σοὶ μαθηταὶ οὐ νηστεύουσιν;

2:19

καὶ

16 εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς,

/-----|

η

Μὴ δύνανται οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος...νηστεύειν;

ἐν ᾧ ὁ νυμφίος μετ' αὐτῶν ἐστίν

ὅσον χρόνον ἔχουσιν τὸν νυμφίον

μετ' αὐτῶν

κ

οὐ δύνανται νηστεύειν.

2:20

δὲ

λ

ἐλεύσονται ἡμέραι

ὅταν ἀπαρθῇ ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὁ νυμφίος,

καὶ

τότε

μ

νηστεύουσιν

ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ.

ν

2:21

οὐδεὶς ἐπίβλημα ράκους ἀγνάφου ἐπιράπτει

ἐπὶ ἱμάτιον παλαιόν·

δὲ

εἰ μή,

ν

αἶρει τὸ πλήρωμα ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ καινὸν τοῦ παλαιοῦ

καὶ

ξ

χειρὸν σχίσμα γίνεται.

ο

καὶ
οὐδεὶς βάλλει οἶνον νέον
εἰς ἀσκοὺς παλαιούς·

π

δὲ
εἰ μὴ,
ῥήξει ὁ οἶνος τοὺς ἀσκοὺς

ρ

καὶ
ὁ οἶνος ἀπόλλυται

σ

καὶ
οἱ ἀσκοὶ -----·

τ

ἀλλὰ
(τις βάλλει) οἶνον νέον
εἰς ἀσκοὺς καινούς·

