

Biblical Notes – Matthew 9:14-17

14-17 – 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.” (Τότε προσέρχονται αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάνου λέγοντες Διά τί ἡμεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι νηστεύομεν, οἱ δὲ μαθηταί σου οὐ νηστεύουσιν; 15. καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς Μή δύνανται οἱ νιοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος πενθεῖν ἐφ' ὅσον μετ' αὐτῶν ἔστιν ὁ νυμφίος; ἐλεύσονται δὲ ἡμέραι ὅταν ἀπαρθῇ ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὁ νυμφίος, καὶ τότε νηστεύσουσιν. 16. οὐδεὶς δὲ ἐπιβάλλει ἐπίβλημα ῥάκους ἀγνάφου ἐπὶ ἴματιών παλαιῶν· αἴρει γάρ τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἴματίου, καὶ χειρὸν σχίσμα γίνεται. 17. οὐδὲ βάλλουσιν οῖνον νέον εἰς ἀσκούς παλαιούς· εἴ δὲ μήγε, ῥήγνυνται οἱ ἀσκοί, καὶ ὁ οῖνος ἐκχείται καὶ οἱ ἀσκοὶ ἀπόλλυνται· ἀλλὰ βάλλουσιν οῖνον νέον εἰς ἀσκούς καινούς, καὶ ἀμφότεροι συντηροῦνται)

“Through these two analogies Jesus seems to be saying that there is a fundamental incompatibility between his ministry and the “old”. This is not to deny that there is no continuity between Judaism and Christianity. But the old containers and old coverings that were good for their day are not capable of containing the dynamic new content that Jesus is introducing. Luke is just as concerned as the other Evangelists to promote the radical newness of the gospel. The old skins of Judaism accommodated the old wine of the old covenant. But the time has come for a change. The old forms have been extended to the limits of their elasticity. Initially the old coverings looked good, but now new clothes are needed. To try to patch the old would only cause a worse tear and also ruin the new cloth. What is the significance of this parable? Jesus is teaching that the new age that he is inaugurating requires new forms. The new age that he is introducing is so dynamic that it will require an elasticity far beyond the capacity of the old age. Jesus did not come to patch up Judaism but to establish something new.”

— Carl B. Hoch, Jr., All Things New: The Significance of Newness for Biblical Theology, 56-57.