

## JESUS IS THE GLORY OF A NEW DAWN

**SCRIPTURE** Matthew 9:14–17: Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” <sup>15</sup> And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. <sup>16</sup> No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. <sup>17</sup> Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, 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.”

**SYNOPSIS** The blazing sun does not transform the night into day so much as Jesus transforms the world in His coming. The breaking in of the sun upon a cold and dark-blinded world only hints at the transforming significance of the coming of Christ. He has just called Matthew—a tax collector. Strong and telling are the reactions of those who identify with righteousness. In this message, we consider the three illustrations that Jesus uses to teach His own revolutionary significance. More than His teaching, more than His miracles—He Himself is the key that unlocks all hope. He has not come to *fix* or *forsake* the old; He has come to *fulfill* (Matthew 5:17). His presence means change. He is the glory of a new dawn.

“RAKING IS EASY BUT ALL YOU GET IS LEAVES. DIGGING IS HARD BUT YOU GET DIAMONDS.”  
— JOHN PIPER

### APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. **The Glory of a New Dawn** — Read the synopsis (above). The sermon points to the effect of the new structure of religion that comes with Christ’s coming into the world. Praise God that just as this new structure broke into Matthew’s life, it breaks into ours as well.

Read and meditate together on 2 Corinthians 4:4-6. Which is more powerful, the sun rising on the earth or Christ shining His light into our hearts? Has this happened to you? How do you know? How does this relate to the immediate response of Matthew to follow Jesus and then throw a feast to celebrate what has happened to him upon hearing the seemingly simple yet all powerful words, “Follow Me!”?

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

2. **Righteousness is not from religion.** Read Matthew 9:14. Why is this not a passage about fasting. What should be striking about the disciples of John the Baptist saying, “we and the Pharisees”? Consider Matthew 3:7–10.

- a. Now read and meditate on Luke 18:9-12. We know from this passage that the Pharisees “trusted in themselves that they were righteous” and that their twice-a-week fast (Luke 9:12) contributed to this righteousness. We also know that Matthew (newly converted) made Jesus “a great feast in his house” (Luke 5:29) and that “when the Pharisees saw this” they treated Jesus and His disciples with contempt (see also Luke 18:9). From Mark 2:17-18 we gather that both the Pharisees and John’s disciples were fasting at this time. The connection between the Pharisees and John’s disciples is best explained by their religious piety for the sake of righteousness. After all, the context is dealing with sin, its forgiveness, and association with repentant sinners. Both the Pharisees and John’s disciples saw righteousness as something in them through religion. The coming of Jesus and His sermon on the mount teaches that righteousness is found in Him and not through the religious means that the Pharisees practiced (Matthew 5:17, 20). The immediate context demonstrates this with Matthew. He was not righteous by religion. As a tax collector, he would have been outcast by the religious institution of that place. But the implication is that He is now righteous because of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30). The point: our righteousness is entirely dependent upon our relationship to Jesus.

John’s disciples were clearly following the religious structure and leaders of their day, the structure of “righteousness in us, through religion.” Is this structure still prevalent in our day? In Christianity? In our own church? In our own hearts? How does this false structure play out in these places so close to home? What does it look like in our thoughts? Actions? Motivations? Consciences? Read and meditate on Romans 1:16-17; 3:28; 4:4-6; Galatians 2:16; 3:11; and Philippians 3:7–9. How does this understanding effect your view of God? Your view of sin? The clarity of the gospel? What is legalism? How can you counter legalism with love to God? How does this touch your hunger for God? How do you relate this to the choices in your daily life? How does it impact your prayers, your devotion, your service, your humility, your hope, and your joy?

3. **Jesus is the Bridegroom.** Read Matthew 9:15. Who is the Bridegroom of Israel? Read Isaiah 54:5-6; 62:4-5; and Hosea 2:16-23. The imagery is all about a wedding—a new marriage. A marriage is a covenant. So the picture suggests that God Himself has come for the making of a new covenant—this was the long-awaited hope of Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-32).

In the sermon, we learned that fasting was a looking forward to, a longing, a mourning for the coming of Christ and that this mourning would be turned into dancing. What did Matthew and presumably some of the sinners at the party recognize that the Pharisees and John’s disciples did

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

not? What was standing right in front of them as they were trying to merit righteousness on their own? What was Jesus trying to tell them in Matthew 9:15?

Read and meditate on Matthew 5:17, 20. Does the presence of Christ and His righteousness in your life bring you freedom to dance at the table of God's grace and mercy? Or, do you let the weight of your sin drag you down to a place where you are in essence paying your own price, waiting for Christ to come back after a few days when he is already and still with you? What does it mean in our lives that Jesus came to fulfill the Law? How can our righteousness exceed that of the Pharisees and in this case, the disciples of John?

4. **Fulfillment revolutionizes faith.** Read Matthew 9:15-17. How do the parables about the patch and the old garment (the word "old" often denotes something used and worn out) and the old/new wine and wineskins connect with the Jesus' claim that He fulfills the hope of the long-awaited Bridegroom?

Read and meditate on Romans 7:1-4 and Colossians 2:16-17. Christianity is incompatible with Judaism (not just legalism) because the coming of the Christ brought fulfillment. It revolutionized the object and manner of faith. What implications does this have for a Christian's obedience to laws presented in the Old Testament?

Read John 4:21-26. How can we live in light of fulfillment? What implications does this have for the Church? With this in mind, read and meditate on Matthew 16:16-18 and Ephesians 5:25-27. Read 2 Corinthians 11:2 and Revelation 22:17 and discuss the preciousness of the Bride and what should characterize her present longing. Jesus fulfills the requirements of the old covenant Law and the righteous demands on us personally. How are you being intentional to live in light of this?

## RECOMMENDED APPLICATION:

- Know why you do what you do
- Counter legalism with love

## **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

- Live in light of fulfillment
- Steward Christ's Bride
- Value the surpassing worth of Christ
- Rejoice in the Lord