

FASTING Part One: GOD REJECTS WRONG FASTING



Don't tune out because of the subject matter. There is so much to learn about fasting. I think most people dread fasting and avoid it. Some people have the wrong idea about what fasting is, what it means, what it does and even how to fast. People are making up their own ways of fasting which are not necessarily in line with God's Word. People are fasting in ways that we do not see in God's Word.

WHAT IS FASTING:

My KJV says: Fasting – going hungry

My open Bible NLT says: Fast(ed)(ing)(s) – to abstain from food

One of my concordances says this:

1. Fast – Only one day was appointed in the Mosaic law for a fast. See Atonement, Day of.

Leviticus 16:29-31 – And *this* shall be a statute for ever unto you: *that* in the seventh month, on the tenth *day* of the month, ye shall afflict your souls (**means to fast**)(Int'l Bible: humble your souls), and do no work at all, *whether it be* one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: For on that day shall *the priest* make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, *that* ye may be clean

from all your sins before the LORD. It *shall be* a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls (**fast**)(Int'l Bible: humble), by a statute for ever(Int'l Bible: it is a statute forever).

2. Fasting – or abstinence from food, was customary among the Jews as a religious duty.

The Old Testament also used phrases like, “separate myself/yourself,” “afflict your souls”, “humble yourself,” and “mourning” at times to mean fasting.

Let's look at Zechariah 7 about some of their religious fasts. The heading above this chapter in the 1560 Geneva Bible says: I. The true fasting. II. The rebellion of the people is the cause of their affliction.

Zechariah 7 - And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, *that* the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth *day* of the ninth month, *even* in Chisleu (Note: here you can see their idolatry written into the Bibles because “chisleu or chislev” is the name for the 9th month in the Babylonian or Aramaic language); When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer (Int'l Bible: Bethel Sherezer) and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD (Int'l Bible: to seek the favor of the face of the LORD – so we see that asking in prayer is seeking His face), *And* to speak unto the priests which *were* in the house of the LORD of hosts (Int'l Bible: to speak to the priests who belong to the house of the LORD of Hosts), and to the prophets, saying, Should I **weep** **in the fifth month, separating myself (**fasting**) (Int'l Bible: consecrating), as I have done these so many years? Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *month*, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, *even* to me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat *for yourselves*, and drink *for yourselves*? *Should ye not hear* the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when *men* inhabited the south (Int. Bible: the Negeb) and the plain (Int'l Bible: low lands)? And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that

they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts *as* an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law (Int'l Bible: and their heart they made adamant from hearing the law), and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in His spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.

Therefore it is come to pass, *that* as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts: But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate. (Int'l Bible: So the land is desolated behind them from passing and from returning, for they made the land of desire a waste.)

Notice they were weeping in their fasting and usually weeping and mourning in Scripture go together. When you separate yourself in fasting you don't go out to eat with everyone and just not eat. You skip the meal, say no thank you and instead spend time in solitude with the LORD. You fast with devotion to the LORD in all seriousness.

Commentary from the NLT: v.1-3: The occasion for this message was the arrival of a deputation, probably of Samaritans from Bethel, on December 7, 518 BC. Since work on the new Temple was going forward again, they wondered whether to continue the fasts commemorating the anniversary of the burning of the city and Temple in 587 BC (see 2 Kings 25:8-10)

v. 4-14: Zechariah's answer, like the messages of earlier prophets, shows that God cares more for righteousness than religious forms. Zechariah reminds them that their fasting was intended to be symbolic of changed hearts demonstrated in changed lives. In and of itself, their fasting, like their eating and drinking, did not affect God, but only themselves (v.6).

Those fasts had been held in memory of the siege and fall of Jerusalem. God knew their heart wasn't in it. They were just going through the motions.

He had not called them to these fasts, they made them up, a religious act and yet were not adhering to God's Law. So they were making up their own religion, like what goes on in many churches today. Things God never said to do are going on.

They thought their made up fasts would please God instead of their obedience to His law.

1 Sam.16:7 - But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Many people are using that scripture to justify their sin. They don't want to turn loose of their sin and so they say, "well God knows my heart." I say to that, Yes He does and He knows what you know so you cannot stand before Him on judgment day and say, well I didn't know this or that when you have had the opportunity to read it in His Word and you have been told by one of His true servants. Be careful about using scripture to justify sin.

So they seemed to be humbling themselves before Him, but this is a case of God sees the heart. He knew they were not sincere in their fasts for Him and that they were not desiring and seeking Him. Their motives were not pure.

Their fasts were supposed to be a way to humble themselves before God in going without food on purpose and by doing so, showing Him that He alone was truly their God. That they wanted to do this, to reverence Him and honor Him in their hearts.

If they were sincere about Him being their God and delighting themselves in Him alone, then their lives would have reflected that change in everything they did. It is the same with us today, when we say we are Christians, does our life and the way we interact with others reflect our Christianity? Or do we look just like the world? Most people say the churches are filled with hypocrites because they don't see them living the way the Bible says we are to live. The sad thing is, that they are usually watching apostate churches when they make those judgments. If you come out of Babylon the carnal Christians will separate from you. They will turn and attack you.

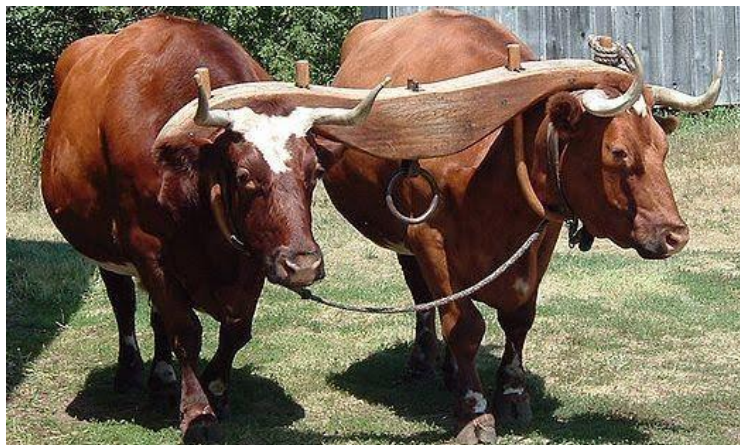
God answered and with:

Zechariah 8:16-23 – These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates (Int'l Bible: judge with truth and justice for peace in your gates): And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD. And the Word of the LORD of Hosts came unto me, saying, Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; The fast of the fourth *month*, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.

****This next part, verses 20 through 23, seems to me it could have been fulfilled when Jesus came the first time. It could also have a future fulfillment with the Jews that are sealed during the tribulation.****

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of Hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of Him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.

CLOSING



The Geneva Bible says that instead of carrying the LORD's burden (this means obeying Him), His burden is sweet, they put upon themselves a heavy and grievous burden of the flesh.

Matt.11:29-30 - Take My yoke upon you, and learn of (Int'l Bible: from Me) Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke *is* easy, and My burden is light.

PRAYER