

Sunday, March 13, 2011—Mark Dispensationally Considered—Mark 2:13-20: The Call of Matthew

Mark 2:13-14

- ***“And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. 14) And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.”***
- Jesus left the house where he had healed the sick of the palsy and returned to the sea side. The multitude that had gathered at the house “resorted” or followed him.
- Jesus sees Levi sitting at the “receipt of custom,” or tax office.
 - Matthew 9:9—Levi is the same person as Matthew
- Luke 5:27—calls Levi/Matthew a publican. The word “publican” occurs 22 times in the King James Bible.
- According to *Strong’s Concordance* the word publican means: 1) a renter or farmer of taxes, 2) a tax gatherer, collector of taxes or tolls, one employed by a publican or farmer general in the collection of taxes. The tax collectors were as a class, detested not only by the Jews, but by other nations also, both on account of their employment and of the harshness, greed, and deception, with which they did their job.
- *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary* defines the word publican as: “a collector of toll or tribute. Among the Romans, a publican was a farmer of the taxes and public revenues, and the inferior officers of this class were deemed oppressive.”
- Matthew was a member of the one of the most detested profession in all of Israel.
- Mark 1:16-20—Matthew like Peter, Andrew, James and John left what they were doing to follow Christ.

Mark 2:15-17

- ***“And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. 16) And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? 17) When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”***
- Luke 5:29—tells us that Matthew prepared at a great feast for Christ at his home and apparently invited a great company of his friends to dine with Christ.

- Mark 2:16—the scribes and Pharisees see Jesus eating with publicans and sinners and question his disciples.
- Mark 2:17—Jesus responds that he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. In other words, those who refused to come to Jesus affirmed that they were healthy and righteous and therefore had no need of Jesus.
- Luke 15:1-7—Jesus tells a parable that illustrates his attitude towards publicans and sinners.
- How many sinners you hung out with lately? How often do we judge people in the way the Pharisees were judging Matthew and his friends?
- Last week we talked about the 4 friends of the sick of the palsy that tore the roof off the building to have their friend see Christ. Are we living in a Christian bubble?
- Matthew 9:13—provides us an added detail not found in Mark or Luke. Jesus tells the Pharisees and scribes to go and learn what this means, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice.”
- Hosea 6:6—Hosea was not saying that God never commanded the people to bring sacrifices, for he did, but that he desired mercy and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings. The Pharisees spot on in terms of their religious observances but their hearts were far from God. They honored him with their lips but denied Him in their works.

Mark 2:18-20

- *“And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? 19) And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20) But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.”*
- Matthew 9:14—tells us that disciples from John came and asked him why they and the Pharisees fast often while Jesus and his disciples are feasting.
- Jesus does not answer why the others fasted, but He likened Himself to a Bridegroom feasting with his groomsmen. As long as He was with them they were feasting, but after He will be taken from them they will fast and not feast.
- It might surprise you to learn that there is no command in the Bible to fast.
- Judges 20:26—is the first mention of fasting in the Bible. Israel was in a state of civil war over the terrible sin which the Benjamites in Gibeah had committed in raping the concubine of a

Levite until she died. All of the eleven tribes went up against Benjamin and in the ensuing strife thousands were killed in battle, but the children of Benjamin were winning the battle.

- In response the 11 other tribes went and sat before the Lord. Who among them had an appetite for food? They offered sacrifices and enquired of the Lord, and the Lord responded and gave them the victory the next day.
- It would seem from this first mention of fasting that it was just the natural reaction to great grief and sorrow and disappointment. It seems that wherever true fasting occurred in the Israel it was almost always in the midst of deep sorrow or trouble or sin that was recognized and confessed.
 - I Samuel 7:6
 - II Samuel 1:12
 - I Kings 21:27
 - Esther 4:3
 - Isaiah 58
- Fasting is mentioned in connection with the Apostle Paul on six occasions:
 - Acts 13:2—first when Paul and Barnabas were sent forth as missionaries
 - Acts 14:23—before ordaining elders in the churches
 - Acts 27:9—the fast is believed by many to be the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27)
 - Acts 27:33—the soldiers had been fasting for fourteen days while the ship was driven out of control by the storm
 - I Corinthians 7:5—Paul speaks to husbands and wives given themselves to prayer and fasting in relation to their sex life
 - II Corinthians 6:5—Paul is speaking about ways of approving one's self as the minister of God
 - II Corinthians 11:27—Paul is recounting all that he had to endure for the sake of Christ.
- Did Paul fast? Yes
- Does that mean you and I **have to** fast? NO
- Are we free under grace to fast or not fast? Yes
- Colossians 2:16, 20-23—the believer today has no feast days or fast days, but that does not mean that a believer cannot feast or fast if they so choose. However, in order to be meaningful fasting should be spontaneous, without compulsion, and from the heart.
- When a religious law is made about fasting, as Roman Catholicism has done, especially in regard to the current season of Lent, it becomes a perfunctory religious observance with little meaning, or worse a meritorious endeavor.