

Various Commentaries on Jesus' Parables About the Garments, and the Wine Skins

Following are nineteen commentaries from assorted Christian traditions on the meaning of Jesus' parables on the garments, and the wine skins, which are found in Matthew 9:14–17, Mark 2:18–22, and Luke 5:33–39. These comments below specifically come from the passage in Mark 2:20-21 and represent the view of the author. While there are a range of opinions on these passages expressed below, they all fall under the umbrella of the idea that Jesus was ushering in a time of newness and fulfillment that signaled the passing of the old.

Believer's Bible Commentary

2:22 The second illustration involved **new wine** in **old wineskins**. The leather wineskins lost their power to stretch. If **new wine** was put into them, the pressure built up by the fermentation would burst the skins. The **new wine** typifies the joy and power of the Christian faith. The **old wineskins** depict the forms and rituals of Judaism. New wine needs new skins. It was no use for John's disciples and the Pharisees to put the Lord's followers under the bondage of sorrowful fasting, as it had been practiced. The joy and effervescence of the new life must be allowed to express themselves. Christianity has always suffered from man's attempt to mix it with legalism. The Lord Jesus taught that the two are incompatible. Law and grace are opposing principles.

Bible Exposition Commentary

The Bridegroom (vv. 18–20). While the first question they asked had to do with the kind of company Jesus was keeping, their second question raised the issue of why Jesus was having such a good time with these people at the table. His conduct, to them, seemed inappropriate . . . Jesus had already made it clear that He came to convert the sinners, not to compliment the self-righteous. Now He told them that he had come to bring gladness, not sadness . . . The Jews knew that marriage was one of the pictures used in the Old

Testament to help explain Israel's relationship to the Lord. They had been "married to Jehovah" and they belonged only to Him (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 31:32). When the nation turned to foreign gods, as they often did, they committed "spiritual adultery." They were unfaithful to their Husband, and they had to be disciplined . . . John the Baptist had already announced that Jesus was the Bridegroom (John 3:29), and our Lord had performed His first miracle at a joyous marriage feast (John 2:1–11). Now He was inviting people to come to the wedding! After all, becoming a Christian is not unlike entering into the marriage relationship (see Rom. 7:4—"that ye should be married to another") . . . Mark 2:20 is a hint of our Lord's anticipated death, resurrection, and return to heaven. It is unlikely that His disciples, at that early stage in their training, even understood what He meant. However, Jesus was not suggesting that His absence from earth would mean that His followers would have to replace the feast with a funeral! He was only pointing out that occasional fasting would be proper at a future time, but that joyful celebration should be the normal experience of believers.

The garment and the wineskins (vv. 21–22). Jesus . . . came to introduce the new, not to patch up the old. The religious leaders were impressed with our Lord's teaching, and perhaps they would have been happy to make some of His ideas a part of their own religious tradition. They were hoping for some kind of compromise that would retain the best of pharisaic Judaism and the best of what Christ had to offer. But Jesus exposed the folly of that approach. It would be like tearing patches from a new unshrunk garment and sewing them on an old garment. You would ruin the new garment; and when the old garment was washed, the patches would shrink, rip away, and ruin that garment too (note Luke 5:36–39). Or, it would be like putting new unfermented wine in old brittle wineskins. As soon as the wine began to ferment and the gases formed, the old skins would burst—and you would lose both the wine and the skins.

Jesus came to usher in the new, not to unite with the old. The Mosaic economy was decaying, getting old, and ready to vanish away (Heb. 8:13). Jesus would establish a New Covenant in His blood (Luke 22:19–20). The Law would be written on human hearts, not on stones (2 Cor. 3:1–3; Heb. 10:15–18); and the indwelling Holy Spirit would enable God's people to fulfill the righteousness of the Law (Rom. 8:1–4) . . . "There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12) . . . The

Christian life is not a mixing of the old and the new; rather, it is a fulfillment of the old in the new. There are two ways to destroy a thing: you can smash it, or you can permit it to fulfill itself. An acorn, for example, can be smashed with a hammer, or it can be planted and allowed to grow into an oak. In both instances, the destruction of the acorn is accomplished; but in the second instance, the acorn is destroyed by being fulfilled.

Jesus fulfilled the prophecies, types, and demands of the Law of Moses. The Law was ended at Calvary when the perfect sacrifice was once offered for the sins of the world (Heb. 8–10). When you trust Jesus Christ, you become part of a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), and there are always new experiences of grace and glory. How tragic when people hold on to dead religious tradition when they could lay hold of living spiritual truth. Why cherish the shadows when the reality has come? (Heb. 10:1ff) In Jesus Christ we have the fulfillment of all that God promised (2 Cor. 1:20).”

The Bible Guide

A time to feast!

(2:18–22) Jesus tells the Pharisees to loosen up! The kingdom of God is arriving. This is a time to be happy and take risks. Their dried-out legalism is like an old garment which will tear, or an old wineskin which will burst.

— Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, 1st Augsburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 448.

Bible Knowledge Commentary

2:18. Mark’s initial statement explained that John’s disciples (John the Baptist’s remaining followers) and the Pharisees (and their disciples or adherents) were fasting, presumably while Jesus and His disciples were feasting at Levi’s house. The Old Testament prescribed fasting for all Jews only on the annual Day of Atonement, as an act of repentance (Lev. 16:29), but the Pharisees promoted voluntary fasts on every Monday and Thursday (cf. Luke 18:12) as an act of piety. In response to a critical inquiry, Jesus showed the incongruity of fasting for His disciples (Mark 2:19–22), though He allowed it if practiced properly (cf. Matt. 6:16–18).

2:19–20. Jesus’ counterquestion set up a comparison and a veiled analogy to Himself. As it is inappropriate for guests (lit., “sons of the bridal chamber,” the groom’s attendants) to fast (an expression of sorrow) in the presence of the bridegroom, so it was inappropriate for Jesus’ disciples to fast (in sorrow) while He was with them. His presence with them constituted a situation as joyous as a wedding festival. But this situation would change, for the time (lit., “days”) would come when the Bridegroom (Jesus) would be taken (aparthē, implying violent removal; cf. Isa. 53:8) from them and on that day (His crucifixion) the disciples would fast in the metaphorical sense of experiencing sorrow in place of joy. This allusion to His coming death is the first hint of the Cross in Mark’s Gospel.

2:21–22. For the first time Mark used two of Jesus’ parables, both of which had broader relevance than to fasting. Jesus’ presence with His people was a time of newness (fulfillment) and signaled the passing of the old.

An attempt to bind the newness of the gospel to the old religion of Judaism is as futile as trying to patch an old (palaion, “worn out by use”) garment with a new, unshrunk piece of cloth. When the new (kainon, “qualitatively new”) piece (plērōma, “fullness”) becomes wet, it will shrink, pull away from the old, and make a larger hole. It is equally disastrous to pour new (neon, “fresh”), not fully fermented wine into old (palaious, “worn out by use,” with no elasticity, brittle) wineskins. Inevitably, as the new wine ferments (expands), it will burst the skins and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. Salvation, available through Jesus, was not to be mixed with the old Judaistic system (cf. John 1:17).

A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture

18. The question put to our Lord was intended to place him in an unfavourable light by contrasting the conduct of his followers with the ascetic practices of the Pharisees and of John’s disciples.

19–20. Christ uses a simple illustration to show that fasting by his disciples is inopportune while he is with them. At a wedding celebration no one expects the companions of the bridegroom to fast, because it is a time of joy. Similarly, while Christ is with the disciples,

fasting is out of place. But when he is taken away, i.e. after his Passion and Death, then the disciples will fast in token of sorrow. It is in this spirit, in association with the sufferings and death of Christ, that the Church orders times of fasting.

21–22. In these two illustrations Christ taught that the spirit which would animate his followers is incompatible with the spirit which inspired pharisaic observance. ‘Raw cloth’ is the new material which has not yet been fulled in order to prevent shrinking. Such material is quite unsuitable for patching old garments, because when it shrinks it will make an even larger rent in the old garment. ‘Bottles’: Gk ‘wineskins’. Skins of animals were commonly used in antiquity as containers for liquids. New unfermented wine must not be put into old wineskins, which are worn and inelastic, as the fermentation may cause them to burst. The disciples were being prepared for a new life animated by a spirit totally different from that of the Pharisees. In the economy to be established by Christ fasting would be practised as a sincere expression of repentance, not as a display of righteousness.

ESV Global Study Bible

MARK—NOTE ON 2:21–22 unshrunk cloth . . . old garment . . . new wine . . . old wineskins. The kingdom of God is not merely a patch over the Mosaic law and Jewish traditions. Jesus brings a new era, with new ways.

ESV Reformation Study Bible

2:21, 22 The images of new cloth and new wineskins again emphasize the new situation brought about by the coming of the kingdom and of its King, and seek to show through the symbols of unwise action the inappropriateness of fasting in this new situation.

Evangelical Commentary on the Bible

Jesus faces a third question from his critics because his followers are not keeping the fasts observed by John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees (2:18–22). His reply, which is parallel to the first two incidents, is couched in the metaphor of a bridegroom and his guests who cannot fast as long as they have him with them. Jesus proclaims in veiled

language that he is the promised bridegroom (cf. Hos. 2:14–23) and that the joyful wedding of God and his people is now going on. Eschatology is now in the process of being realized because Jesus is standing in the place of God and is marrying his people by announcing the present reality of promised salvation. The mourning of repentance and fasting has had and will again have its rightful place; it has appropriately preceded Jesus in the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist, and Jesus prophesies that fasting will again endure for a “day” when he dies and as the bridegroom is briefly taken from them. But now, and following his death, joyful celebration is and will be the order of the new time Jesus has inaugurated. (Cf. the first miracle John has selected to highlight, the wedding at Cana [John 2:1–11], which also has striking Christological significance and occurs early in Jesus’ ministry.) For this reason the new age needs a new wineskin to contain the new wine; the old is too weak and too brittle to accommodate the new salvation, freedom, and joy that Jesus is bringing.

Expositor’s Bible Commentary

In the law only the fast of the Day of Atonement was required (Lev 16:29, 31; 23:27–32; Num 29:7), but after the Exile four other annual fasts were observed by Jews (Zech 7:5; 8:19). In NT times the stricter Pharisees fasted twice a week (Monday and Thursday; cf. Luke 18:12) . . . Why these two groups were fasting, Mark does not say . . . The Pharisees’ disciples were probably observing one of the bi-weekly fasts. In both instances fasting was a sign of true piety. This being the case, “some people” (Mark does not identify them specifically) were asking why Jesus’ disciples were not evidencing true religious piety by fasting . . . Jesus answers in a parable. Its great emphasis is on the joy the presence of Jesus makes possible. Therefore fasting—a sign of mourning—is not appropriate. A Jewish wedding feast was a particularly joyous occasion. The guests joined in the celebration that sometimes lasted a week. To fast during that time of great joy and festivity would be unthinkable. Jesus is the bridegroom (v. 19) and his disciples the guests. While he remains with them they will rejoice, not fast. However, he will not always be with them. When he is taken away (v. 20), fasting will be appropriate . . . A wedding, new wine, and a new garment are all symbols of the New Age. The main teaching of the parable seems to be that the newness the coming of Jesus brings cannot be confined to the old forms.

Faithlife Study Bible

2:18–22 In this section, Jesus discusses fasting with a group of people—explaining why His disciples do not fast when others do. Fasting was a key element of Judaism in the first-century AD, even though only one day of fasting was required by the law (Lev 16:29–30). Jesus in no way condemns fasting (compare Acts 13:2); instead, He explains why it was not necessary while He was bodily present with His disciples.

2:18 Pharisees Luke 18:11–12 indicates that fasting was a characteristic of the Pharisees’ piety.

said to him In both Jewish and Graeco-Roman culture, a teacher was held responsible for the behavior of his students (compare Mark 2:23–24). Previously, the Pharisees asked Jesus’ disciples to explain Jesus’ behavior (v. 16); now they ask Jesus to explain His disciples’ behavior.

2:19 fast Mourning or penitential activity would be inappropriate at a joyous occasion such as a wedding.

2:20 is taken away from them Jesus’ remark foreshadows His own future—His betrayal, arrest, and execution.

2:21 the new from the old Jesus emphasizes the change brought about by the kingdom’s arrival. While the previous analogy (vv. 19–20) contrasted present and future, this verse distinguishes between old and new. See note on Matt 9:16.

Holman New Testament Commentary

Jesus Is Lord over the Law (2:18–27)

SUPPORTING IDEA: Jesus did not come to reform Judaism, but to revolutionize it.

2:18–19. Fasting was another of the Pharisees’ interpretations of the law that the common people (“sinners”) did not follow. Jewish tradition demanded a fast once a year: on the day of Atonement. For the stricter Jews, however, fasting was practiced much more frequently. The Pharisees fasted twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays. These were generally

twelve-hour fasts, from sunup to sundown. The Pharisees also made sure that people knew how spiritual they were by showing everyone they were fasting (Matt. 6:16–18).

Some people asked Jesus why Jesus' disciples did not fast. We do not know if this was an honest question or an implied accusation of unrighteousness. In reply, Jesus used an analogy common to the time—the bridal party. Since engagements were often long (in some cases years), the actual wedding was a time of feasting and great joy. William Barclay notes, “In a hard wrought life the wedding week was the happiest week in a man’s life.... There was actually a rabbinic ruling which said, ‘All in attendance on the bridegroom are relieved of all religious observances which would lessen their joy’” (Barclay, Mark, p. 59).

The wedding celebration also symbolized the age of salvation. This verse also serves as a messianic reference with Christ as the bridegroom. Jesus' joy reminds us of Hebrews 12:2, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross.” Our salvation in Christ is a joyous event, not an irksome duty.

2:20. This is the first indication in Mark that Jesus was fully aware of his mission. Jesus' prediction here introduces a somber note that has been missing up to now in Mark's account of miracles and controversies. It reminds us that joy and suffering are often two different sides of the same coin.

2:21–22. Again, Jesus used analogies that the Jews of that day would have been familiar with. In sewing, if a piece of unshrunk cloth was used to patch an old garment, the patch would shrink when it was washed, making a worse tear of the cloth. New wine needs to be put in flexible skins so the skin has room to expand as it ferments. If it is put into an old, brittle skin, it will burst the skin. Jesus was making the point that the new order and the old order (symbolized either by the Pharisees or John the Baptist) are incompatible. Jesus' claim is that something new is happening. Verse 18 brought up John the Baptist and his disciples, who taught the need for repentance because the kingdom of God was at hand. Jesus claimed that something new was happening, something incompatible with even John the Baptist. It was a message of salvation; and this echoed Jesus' proclamation of his mission in Luke 4:18–19. In these verses, Jesus did not finish the Isaiah quote, but stopped

it here: “To proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Something new was happening—and old, brittle wineskins would not be able to contain it.

It is interesting to note that in each case something is destroyed. God does not just mend our hearts; he gives us brand new ones. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek. 36:26). He gives us a new nature, and we are new creatures in Christ. To try to put this kind of life into old, legalistic systems is to destroy the new life.

This teaching anticipates Paul’s teaching that Christianity is not an extension of Judaism. Judaism cannot contain it. Jewish laws are not binding upon Christians. Paul took up this topic with enthusiasm in Galatians. The old order regulated behavior with rules; the new order regulates by relationship. Jesus did not come to reform Judaism, as the prophets before him had. He came to introduce a new entity, the church.

2:23–24. In a continuation of the preceding confrontation with the Pharisees, Mark introduces a controversy that was at the heart of Judaism—the Sabbath....

Jon Courson’s Application Commentary

According to the Talmud, there is one time a man is absolved of duty, even prayer: at a wedding ceremony. The only duty a man had at a wedding ceremony was to rejoice. Thus, Jesus is saying, “This is not the time to be fasting.” And He says the same thing today. I don’t know when Christianity began being associated with grumpiness, for ours is not a call to religion, but to relationship, not to sadness, but to gladness, not to a funeral, but to a wedding.

Mark 2:20...If a church does not have the presence of Jesus, if the joy of the Lord is not there, services will be like funerals. But if the Lord is there, it’s time to rejoice and celebrate the gospel and our great salvation. We’re forgiven. We’re on our way to heaven. The Lord is risen. Happy is the people whose God is the Lord! (Psalm 144:15).

Mark 2:21, 22...There are those who suggest that Jesus came to reform Judaism. Jesus, however, says “I’m not talking about patching up the old system or refilling old wineskins. Something new is happening.” The question then arises: What did He mean when He declared in Matthew 5 that He came not to destroy the old, but to fulfill it? Perhaps the answer is best illustrated with an acorn. If I set an acorn on the ground and hit it repeatedly with a hammer, it would soon be destroyed. If, on the other hand, I bury it in the ground, it would likewise be destroyed. But in the second case, its destruction would bring about fulfillment, for it would bring forth a whole new tree. When Jesus said, “I have come to fulfill the Law,” it was in the sense of the buried acorn. That is, once the law shows us we’re sinners in need of a Savior, its work is complete—fulfilled in the Person of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

King James Study Bible

2:22. **Bottles** are wineskins, the **old** ones figuratively representing Judaism and the **new** ones, Christianity. Old wineskins lose their elasticity and would be **burst** open by the fermentation of **new wine** put into them. The point: the old faith of Judaism and the new faith of Christianity cannot be mixed, nor can the practices or traditions (e.g., the time of fasting) of Judaism be forced on Christianity.

Mark: An Introduction and Commentary

iv. Controversy about fasting (2:18–22)

John’s disciples, and so, we may infer, John himself, were meticulous in keeping the ceremonial law. This orthodoxy of John the Pharisees grudgingly admitted, even in their criticism of Jesus. John was therefore no heresiarch, but a bastion of orthodox Judaism, although as caustic in his remarks on the priesthood as many a prophet before him had been. Since several at least of the disciples of Jesus had been John’s followers before the Baptist’s testimony sent them away from him to follow Jesus (John 1:35–37), this strictly orthodox background of the apostles is important. Both to the Pharisees, and to John himself at times, it must have looked suspiciously as though these disciples had chosen an easier way in following Jesus. Although regular weekly fasting was not part of the law of Moses, by the first century such fasting had become an important part of the practice of

Judaism, from which it passed into early Christianity, with only a change in the actual days involved. To the orthodox Jew this one minor point of fasting raised the whole question of the attitude of Jesus to the whole ceremonial law. He had already healed on the sabbath (1:31), though this had not yet become an issue; his disciples ate food without the prior ceremonial hand-washing customary in Judaism (7:2), and they even husked corn on the sabbath day (2:23). Taken together, this was highly suspicious: did this rabbi reject the traditions?

19–22. As often, Jesus answered the Pharisaic criticism at two levels. First, he replied on the superficial level at which these carping questions were usually asked. Then, having already demolished the objection of the Pharisees on their own premises, he proceeded to deal with the question at a far deeper theological level. Here one might paraphrase the question as, ‘in a time of joyous fellowship, who thinks of fasting?’ Fasting is, in the Bible, a sign of disaster, or penitence or mourning, or voluntary abasement of spirit. The grief which finds expression in this fasting will come soon enough of its own accord, when the fellowship of the disciples with Jesus is broken; the disciples will have sorrow then, at his departure to the Father (John 16:20). To apply the analogy, which so obviously fits human affairs, it might be said that the time when Jesus was with his disciples on earth was in many ways an interim period and not normative for the church . . .

But there was a far deeper question, which not even the disciples saw until their forcible expulsion from the ranks of orthodox Judaism in the days of the Acts. Was the whole structure of Jewish ceremonial, fasting naturally included, really consonant with the new spirit of the followers of the Messiah? A new spirit must find new forms of expression; that is the lesson of the parable. Indeed, the book of Acts shows with increasing clarity the utter impossibility of containing this new Christianity as a mere ‘Reformed Sect’ within Judaism, although fasting is known in Acts even in largely Gentile churches (Acts 13:1–3). It was no accident that not only the Judaizers but even the non-heretical Jewish-Christian churches known to Eusebius (both of whom continued to observe the law) died out in later centuries: they had tried in vain to put new wine into old wineskins. Whenever the fresh life of the Spirit breathes in the church, the same problem arises, as the church seeks for appropriate forms in which to contain and express the new life, without losing

continuity with the old. Yet Christianity, for all its outward differences, was not a breach with Judaism, but its fulfilment (see on 1:2).

NASB Charles F. Stanley Life Principles Bible Notes

2:22 — “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.”

All of us tend to resist change, but God’s Spirit continually moves in new ways and in new directions. The main teaching of this Scripture is to remind us that the newness of the gospel message cannot be held in the wineskins of tradition. If we want to keep in step with the Spirit, we need to be willing to change the way we do things.

New Bible Commentary

2:18–22 The old and the new (see Mt. 9:14–17; Lk. 5:33–39). Jesus’ unorthodox behaviour did not only provoke the criticism of the religious authorities, it also puzzled ordinary people. They wanted to know why Jesus’ followers were different from those of the Pharisees and John the Baptist and did not seem to worry about some of the rituals of Judaism like, for instance, the weekly fastdays. Such practices, though not in the Law of Moses, had come to be just as important in Jewish eyes. Jesus gave a quick answer: nobody fasts at a wedding-feast. Fasting shows sorrow, and if there is any sorrow, it would be after the feast, when the bridegroom had left the party. This may have been a popular proverb (like the saying about doctors and sick people above) but Jesus clearly meant himself when he spoke of the bride-groom. The words taken from them imply violence (if not death), so Jesus may have been speaking about the cross, bringing sorrow to all.

There is an issue here that goes deeper than fasting alone. If Jesus had brought fresh spiritual life, could it be contained within the old rigid forms of Judaism or would it need fresh forms? . . . Jesus never condemned fasting; he fasted himself. But formal and compulsory Jewish fasting would not fit with the freedom and spontaneity of the new life which he brought. Are we stifling new life by old forms, however beloved they may be to us? Some forms we must have but have we worked out new forms and are they suitable?

NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible

Matt 9:16-17 Jesus message is new enough compared to the old ways of Judaism that it requires new attitudes and behaviors, including last faster. After his death and resurrection, believers do occasionally fast (13:2-3) but not with the regularity of the Jewish leaders.

Mark 2:18-22 Jesus questioned about fasting. Criticism of Jesus disciples for not fasting leads to Jesus' declaration that not only is he is real bridegroom but that his coming requires a new way of being Israel.

2:19 having just exercised the divine prerogative to forgive sin (vv. 5–12), Jesus now implies that he is Israel's divine husband (cf. Eph 5:32; Rev 19:7).

2:21–22 The same section in Isaiah that speaks of God's remarrying Israel also proclaims that he will do something new (Isa 48:6; 65:17; cf. Isa 42:9; 43:18–19). Ezekiel spoke of God's putting a new heart and new spirit into his people (Ezek 11:19; 18:31; 36:26), and Jeremiah foretold a "new covenant" (Jer 31:31), declaring that the new deliverance would be so wonderful that it would replace the exodus as the event by which God was known (Jer 16:14–15; 23:6–8). These two parables (see note on 4:2) explain that the new thing Jesus brings cannot be superimposed on the old. The old patterns of relating to God must give way. Not only will Jesus' teaching become the new norm (e.g., 7:14–15; 9:7; cf. 8:35), but his life and new Passover/new covenant death will become the new way in which God is now to be known throughout the world (cf. 13:10; 15:39).

Luke 5:36-39 This parable emphasizes the discontinuity between the old age and new age. The new age is brought about by God through decisive revelation in his Son, and it demands all acceptance and obedience to his Son (18:22).

5:39 The old is better. Jewish religious leaders claim this; they refuse to abandon their rules and customs and receive Jesus, the bearer of the new age of salvation. This claim fails to recognize the establishment of the “new covenant” (Jer 31:31), in which the law is now written “on their hearts” (Jer 31:33).

NIV Application Commentary

The query about fasting prompts three parabolic answers. The first response assumes that the kingdom of God, which has drawn near in Jesus’ preaching and merciful activity, is not a funeral wake but a wedding party. No one wants grim-visaged fasters casting a pall on the joyous celebration. In the presence of such joy, it is not only inappropriate to fast, it is impossible. Jesus does allude, however, to a time when mourning will be more fitting, when the bridegroom is “taken from them,” an oblique reference to his passion and death. But even that is not to be a permanent state. The joy of the resurrection will transform all grief and sorrow.

The second and third responses draw on metaphors from everyday life to illustrate the significance of Jesus’ ministry. The images of patching cloth and pouring new wine into wineskins do not provide advice for the happy homemaker. No tips are given on how to prepare the patch by prewashing it or the wineskins by moistening them. The garment will tear when it is washed and the patch of new, stronger fabric shrinks. Old wineskins already stretched to their limits and now inflexible will burst when the new wine expands. The point is clear. The new that Jesus brings is incompatible with the old. He has not come to patch up an old system that does not match the revolutionary rule of God. He is not simply a reformer of the old, but one who will transform it. There can be no concessions, no accommodations, and no compromises with the old. The old is not just represented by the Judaism of the Pharisees because the disciples of John and their Judaism are also mentioned. The old, exemplified by the condemnation and exclusion of sinners in the

previous controversy and the practice of fasting in this debate, cannot contain the new. Both will be ruined if they are combined.

In the incident that follows, Jesus argues that such things as the Sabbath laws are made for the benefit of humans and not vice versa (2:27). Food laws are superfluous; it is only purity of the heart that matters (7:19 - 23). Love of neighbor is greater than sacrifice (12:23). The temple will even be destroyed, and a new one not made with hands will be raised in its place. The sound of ripping is discernible throughout the Gospel. The heavens rip open at the baptism (1:10). Caiaphas, the high priest, tears his garment when confronted with Jesus' claim to be the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One (14:63). The temple veil is ripped from top to bottom when Jesus dies on the cross (15:38). The rips signify "the end of the old and the birth of the new.