Matt 9:15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. 16 No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. 17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved. KJV

The “bridechamber” refers to a special room that was prepared for the bride and groom to sexually consummate their marriage. Edersheim tells us that “children of the bridechamber” is a well-known rabbinic idiom for those who were invited to a Jewish wedding. It is derived from a Hebraic term, “bene huppah,” meaning children of the huppah. A huppah is a tent or canopy that is held over the bride and groom during the wedding ceremony. The term “bene huppah” simply refers to the guests who have been invited to the wedding. In English, they are called the Children of the Bridechamber. By presenting His disciples as “the children of the bridechamber” and Himself as “the Bridegroom,” Jesus was building on the prophetic foreshadowing of a marriage between God and His people contained in the OT.

Jesus gave the words above in response to a question about why He did not lead His disciples in regular fasting like other Jewish religious leaders. This same exchange is recorded in Mark 2:19-22 and Luke 5:34-39, where three times, Jesus alluded to Himself as the Bridegroom and spoke of his disciples as “the children of the bridechamber.” Three times, He also said that something NEW could not be contained in something OLD. Jesus said it was not a time for fasting. He was saying that He had come as the Bridegroom to present His honorable desires

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for a Bride to mankind and He alluded to the fact that there should have been great celebration and feasting during this joyous occasion of His coming.

The Jewish leaders had basically asked, “Why don’t your disciples fast and do our traditional “religion” like John’s disciples and others have always done?” Jesus responded by saying, fasting was good, but more importantly, you can’t put the NEW things of God into OLD containers. His main point was, don’t try to make the New Covenant just a patch on the Old Covenant and don’t try and force the NEW into the ways of the OLD.

Jesus was trying to tell us that the New Covenant is not just an addition to the Old. Because the Bridegroom has come, all things have been made NEW. We must treat the New Covenant differently, and recognize that the old ways of doing things have changed. The promises of the Old Testament have been fulfilled in Jesus and NOW everything is different for His followers. The Old Testament was written for the Jewish people and for us, but the Old Covenant is no longer in force. The writer of Hebrews put it this way, “By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; (Heb 8:13a)

God is not finished with His Jewish people and God is not finished with the Old Testament. The Old Covenant was a marriage covenant between God and Israel, but having said that; Jesus is not just another Jewish prophet. The New Covenant is a New Marriage Covenant. The Old Testament was given to point to Jesus as the Son of God and Bridegroom of the New Covenant. In writing these daily devotionals, I am trying to expound on ancient Jewish marriage customs so that we can better understand how they were used to point to Jesus and the New Marriage Covenant. The old has passed away and all things have been made new in Jesus.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the Old Marriage Covenant and thank you for making a New Marriage Covenant with us. Thank you for using marriage customs in the Bible to teach us new truths about your Kingdom and our relationship with You. Please remind me never to put the New Wine of your Holy Spirit into old, religious traditions. In Jesus’ name, Amen.