
Fasting Article No. 5 – Instruction

By Prayer and Fasting (Part Five — Famous Fasts)

“One nation under God,” is still in our pledge, though many Christians think it should not be. I am not among them. While there has been a great deal of movement in this country away from our spiritual heritage, the answer is not to give in — we should never give place to the devil. A return to the God Who created all men equal, and granted to every man certain unalienable rights is what is needed. George Washington was a man of profound faith in the Sovereign God of nations. When reflecting on the prospects of war with Britain for American independence he wrote these words in his general orders to his men, on July 2, 1776: “... The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army.” At Gettysburg, Abraham Lincoln echoed this foundational principle when he said, “... that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom ...” Let no one tell you that the idea that America is one nation under God is something lately contrived and forced into the pledge by religious zealots in the mid fifties. On the other hand, don’t suppose for a moment this country can remain one nation under God unless He grants us a new spiritual awakening.

In past articles, I have shown from the Scripture that Jesus expects us to fast in these days [Mark 2:20]. I don’t have to convince you that Satan is actively seeking whom he may devour [1Peter 5:8], that he sometimes hinders our work [1Thessalonians 2:18], and that we must resist him [James 4:7]. Indeed, Scripture promises that if we resist the devil, he will flee from us. But the context of that verse requires that we first submit to God. No one who refuses to accept the clear teaching of the Bible on the subject of fasting should pretend he has sufficient power with God to resist the devil — for he is clearly insubordinate to Christ Jesus. Jesus said there are devils that can only be overcome by prayer and fasting [Matthew 17:21], and it seems increasingly clear to me that many of His churches are hindered by devils of this kind.

After Easter, each year, our church enters into a period of fasting and prayers for forty days. As I write this, one or more of our members is fasting and praying for revival. I have a preaching engagement next week, but when I return, I’ll enter into an extended period of fasting and praying for many things of concern to me — but over and above all, I’ll be praying for a revival of God’s people in America. For the last nation under God in history was Judah — and we all know what happened to that nation when it turned away from the God of their fathers. It is more than coincidence that the very nations God used to judge Judah are rattling their sabers at America today. Selah!

In this article, I want to begin looking at famous fasts. The most famous are the forty days fasts of Jesus, Moses and Elijah. After that, I suppose either Daniel’s twenty-one day fast, or Esther’s three day fast would qualify as among the most well known. For the next few articles, we’ll be following the Holy Spirit as He guides us into insights from what I call the famous fasts of the Bible.

The forty days fast

Toward the end of His earthly ministry Jesus met with Elijah and Moses in what Peter called the holy mount [2Peter 1:18; See Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-10; Luke 9:28-36]. In the presence of Peter, James and John, the Father exalted His only begotten Son above Moses and Elijah; and at the same time, He showed to us whom He has chosen to sit beside His Son in His Kingdom [Matthew 20:21; Zechariah 4:14]. These three are noteworthy for being the most spiritually empowered men who ever walked on earth — Jesus Christ being greatest among them, to Whom the Father gave not His Spirit by measure [John 3:34]. Something else connects these three. Each of them is noteworthy for having fasted forty days and forty nights [Moses, twice – Deuteronomy 9:9-19 in Mt. Horeb; Elijah – 1Kings 19:8 in Mt. Horeb, here called the mount of God; Jesus, the Christ– Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-14, led “up” of the Spirit into the wilderness]. The Spirit intended for us to make the connection

between the power these men demonstrated and their fasting and prayers in this holy mount. But in case you're among those reduced from "ears" [Matthew 11:5] to "an ear" [Revelation 2:7], and so suffer from some dullness of hearing [Hebrews 5:11], the Spirit makes this connection very clear in what occurred after they came down from the holy mount.

Peter, James and John, returned with Jesus to the other disciples after the most glorious mountain top experience in Christian history. And, immediately, they were presented with the case of the child possessed with a demon the disciples were powerless to cast out [Matthew 17:14-21], even though Jesus had before given them power over all devils [Luke 9:1]. Jesus lamented, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me" [Matthew 17:17]. Jesus then rebuked the devil, and "... the child was cured from that very hour." Ashamed, they asked why they could not cast out this devil. Jesus explained that it was because of their unbelief, and exposed how little was their faith. But then He said, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" [Matthew 17:21]. If any continue to have trouble seeing the clear connection between fasting with prayers and the demonstration of the power of God [1Thessalonians 1:5], all I can say is, apparently, it is not for them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven [Matthew 13:11].

We notice that when Jesus returned from His desert fast, the Spirit specifically declared that He "... returned in the power of the Spirit ..." [Luke 4:14]. But Jesus already was filled with the Holy Ghost when He entered into the desert [Luke 4:1]. Indeed, He was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost [Luke 1:35]. Yea, verily, the Word, being in the "form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God ..." [John 1:1; Philippians 2:5-9], and the Spirit of the Heavenly Father is none other than the Spirit of Christ [Romans 8:9]. So, why did the Spirit point this out, that when Jesus returned from His forty days and nights of fasting and praying, He returned in the "power of the Spirit" unless it is because the Spirit intends that we follow in His steps, and so desires us to know the path to power with God is in this example of His Son [1Peter 2:21].

Although we know the Apostles regularly fasted with prayers, we have no record that any of them joined this elite fellowship. Indeed, I think it would be ill conceived for any to presume to enter this fellowship unless the Holy Spirit very specifically required it, for only then could anyone hope to be sustained through such a fast. Notice, in the case of Moses, Elijah and Jesus, the Spirit compelled them to fast. He directed when it was to begin, how long it was to continue and exactly when it was to conclude.

And with this, I must conclude this article. Next time we will explore the kingdom power fasts of Jesus, Moses and Elijah in greater depth. For now, consider this. Jesus has given us power [Acts 1:8]. Indeed, greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world. And like the father who brought his demon possessed child to the disciples in hopes they could help him, fathers and mothers bring to us their sons and daughters in hopes we might help them against the demons that assault their lives. Believe me when I say they don't need more activities, and they certainly don't need us to accommodate the demons that already have control of their flesh through their carnal music and dress and attitudes of rebellion. What they need is to come to a church where there are men of God who have the power of God on their lives sufficient to address the demons that plague their families. And the kind of demons attacking our kids today, brethren, are the kind that require fasting and prayers to overcome.

Word Count 1462 (Plus 77 words in footnotes)