

Fasting Article No. 6 – Instruction
By Prayer and Fasting (Part Six — Famous Fasts)

We've been invited [Hebrews 4:16]! So come with me into the throne room of the Almighty [Revelation 4-5].

Heaven's doors open and our eyes are immediately stabbed with spears of light so bright we're blinded. Undulating from deep within the brilliant room are sounds that wash over us like waves so pure we neither of us dare to cry out, or even to whisper. When suddenly a thunderous roar reverberates in the air, fear crawls, no claws, across our flesh exciting a sense of self-loathing and an intense foreboding that we don't belong in this place. At just the moment we begin to withdraw, our joints go loose and we find ourselves whisked deep into the room, and now we are lying prostrate on its floor, a veritable sea of glass like crystal. There is the sound of fluttering wings over our heads, and the sensation of a balm anointing our eyes, and the sweet cooing of a dove. Peace passing understanding settles us as our eyes begin to focus on the glorious sights in this Holy place.

Fire light flashes and sparkles in the crystal floor all around us. We did not stand ourselves up upon this floor, but we find our selves standing there nonetheless, agog at the sight of the great throne before us. A glance is all we can bear, but from that single glance, burned in our brain is the image of a fiery throne, and one sitting in it with a face shining in the brightness of the noonday sun, over arched by an emerald rainbow — with lightening streaking to and from the throne in every direction — and intermittent thunder roars so deep and powerful that but for whatever invisible grace sustains us in this place, we would instantly surely turn to dust and ashes. The sound of many waters swells behind us and when we turn, there we see a Lamb, as it had been slain. Suddenly, we sense we have been released from the grip of an invisible and irresistible force, and instinctively we know the only safe place for us here is there, by the Lamb; so we flee to Him and cling to Him with all the strength remaining in us.

Consider brethren, we have been called to come boldly into this place — this room where God sits upon His throne, surrounded by the four beasts and the twenty-four elders, and where the cherubim sing “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which is, which was, and which is to come ...” over and over and over while the Seraphim weave their own glorious melody around the Holy refrain — how can we come boldly into this room? It is because of this Lamb that God has placed in the midst of it, and only by His invitation. And why has He invited us to enter His heavenly tabernacle? It is to find grace to help in time of need. Remember the daddy with the demon-possessed child crying for help from the man of God? Come, brethren, come mothers and fathers, come preachers and deacons and Sunday School teachers and Christian school teachers, come — here is where you will find that grace to help in time of need.

What has this to do with fasting? The flesh has no place before the Throne of Almighty God. In Exodus 20:26, Moses was moved by the Holy Spirit to write, “Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.” Did the bare ankles of a man bring a blush to God's face — of course not! These things are written for our admonition, specifically, for those of us upon whom the ends of the world are come [1Co. 10:11]. Who with New Testament light regarding the irreconcilable

enmity that separates the flesh of man from God, cannot see the point of this instruction [Romans 8:7]? Yea, God would not have a flash of flesh in His presence. We must worship Him in “spirit and in truth.” Those in the *flesh* need not bother [Romans 8:8.]. But we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in us [Romans 8:9]. Let us therefore “walk in the Spirit” [Galatians 5:6], and not after the flesh [Romans 8:1-4], particularly when we come to pray before the Throne of the Almighty God. Beware you do not show a flash of flesh in His presence, lest He immediately close the doors of His countenance against you and refuse to hear you [Isaiah 59:1-2; James 4:3 with 1John 2:16; Galatians 5:16].

By fasting we weaken the hold of the appetites of our flesh on our spirit; yea, we humble our lifted up soul, yea we bring this body under, and allow our spirit to embrace the grace, the thrice holy grace of the lover, the helper, the healer of our sin sickened souls. Fasting slaps proud fleshly appetite and rebuffs its constant demand for preeminence over spiritual ones. Tis strange how spiritual hunger increases with physical hunger, and how when physical hunger is denied its demands, spiritual hunger turns fully to God and is fed that sweet heavenly manna till it is full of the glory of the Lord, and His righteousness [Matthew 5:6].

We are studying famous fasts. The forty-days fasts of our Lord Jesus, and His servants, Moses and Elijah, were introduced in my last article as probably the most famous fasts in history. Let’s look at the greatest of these — the forty-days fast of Jesus our Lord.

Introduction to the forty-days fast of Jesus The forty-days fast of Jesus is recorded in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. We must consider both accounts to get the complete picture. The Spirit, by Luke, testifies that Jesus already was “full of the Holy Ghost” before he followed the Spirit into the desert [Luke 4:1]. Indeed, in Him has dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily from the moment of conception [Colossians 2:9; Philippians 2:5-11; 1Timothy 3:16; Luke 1:35]. Matthew tells us He was “led up of the Spirit,” indicating two things; first, that He went up, probably into a desert mountain, and that He was there sequestered from the daily routine of his life, secluded from the world, alone with God — and second, this He did under the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the Spirit leads us into an extended fast sequestered from family and friends. In a future article, I intend to offer insight to help you discern when the Spirit is calling you to such a fast. It is certain that some will be shocked to learn how often the Spirit called for such a fast but was not followed “into the desert.”

The Spirit, by Luke, informs us that throughout the forty-days of fasting, Jesus was tempted of the devil [Luke 4:2]. This helps us unravel a knot concerning these two accounts. We find that the order of the temptation recorded in Luke (stone to bread, kneel to Satan, leap from the pinnacle) differs from that given in Matthew 4 (stone to bread, leap from pinnacle, kneel to Satan). We also note that in Luke’s account the Spirit reveals that Jesus said to Satan, “Get thee behind me, Satan ...” [Luke 4:8], but in Matthew’s account we are told He said, “Get thee hence, Satan ...” [Matthew 4:10]. Clearly, sometime during the course of Jesus’ forty-days of fasting, Satan came upon Him, first tempting Him to turn the stone to bread, next, perhaps even some few days later, tempting Him to bow down and worship Satan, and finally, again, perhaps some days later still, attacking Him with the temptation to leap from the pinnacle. At this effort, Jesus, knowing his battle was not yet done, commanded Satan not to depart, but to take

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the place that belonged to him, behind the Son of God. But when the forty days of fasting was completed, Satan unleashed upon Him one final assault, and that is what we find recorded in Matthew's account. When this was finished, Jesus commanded Satan to depart.

In my next article, we'll explore insights into the work the Holy Spirit desires to accomplish in our hearts during an extended period of fasting and prayers, from the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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