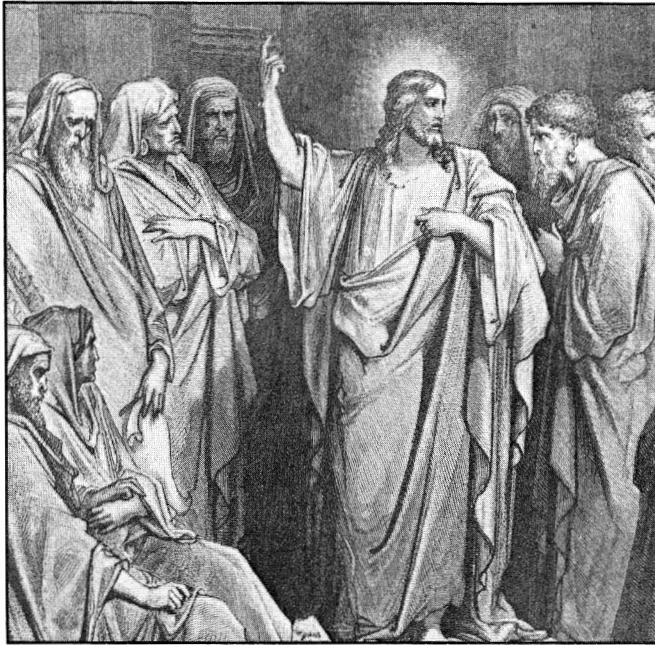


## Western Wisdom Bible Study



### Jesus' Answer to the Pharisees

*And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.*

*And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?*

*But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

*But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinner to repentance.*

*Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?*

*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.*

*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.*

*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.*

—Matthew 9:10-17

In this passage of Scripture we have, first of all, a striking illustration of the difference between the Teaching of Christianity and the old pharisaical race religion, which was based on law. The separateness encouraged by race religions, the observance of form and law, often hypocritical, were to yield to the higher teaching of unity, compassion, and brotherhood. The publicans and sinners needed the attention of “a physician,” and

were no doubt in a measure ready to accept His ministrations. No longer were the “sacrifices” demanded under the regime of Jehovah to be in order. Instead, “I will have mercy,” said the new Teacher. Henceforth the sacrifice must be made by the inner man: all forms of selfishness must be laid on the altar, and mercy and compassion be cultivated.

In regard to fasting, Christ Jesus used the customs of the day to make His teaching explicit. George M. Lamsa, in his *Gospel Light*, states that: “Easterners are usually sober and live simply but during wedding feasts and banquets they indulge in drinking and excessive eating. Social customs, fastings, and other religious observances are put aside for the time being...The disciples of the Pharisees and of John fasted according to Jewish tradition but the disciples of Jesus did not fast. Jesus was the bridegroom who was with them only for a brief period. While he was with them, they need not observe the traditions of the elders, but the time was to come when he would be taken away just as the bridegroom leaves the merrymakers.” The new Teaching brought by the great Sun Spirit, Christ, sounded a higher note—the note of inner purity rather than of physical abstinence only.

The last two verses of this passage refer again to the passing of the old and the coming of the new. Under the new regime it would be necessary that one keep a receptive mind, an adaptable attitude, so that the new truths might be discerned. Only in this way can the progress of the individualized Spirit proceed. New religions are given whenever the time is ripe by the Higher Ones directing the evolution of humanity. Those who reject the new Teaching, clinging to the old, must eventually experience severe suffering in order to be able to receive the leaven which insures a higher state of consciousness. □