

“AND WHEN YOU.....!”
MATTHEW CH6:16-18

ILLUSTRATION

We live at a time when our culture worship a false god, and this false god, transcends, cultures, race, gender, age, education and all other human distinctions. There are no barriers that this false god cannot overcome, apart from one, because this false god has only one limitation, JESUS!

RIGHTEOUSNESS!

JESUS has since Ch5:20 preached about the need to be different to the Pharisees and their teaching:

You have heard it said V21, V27, V31, V33, V38 + V43

But I tell you V18, V21, V22, V28, V32, V34, V39 + V44

Then from Ch6:1 JESUS has warned His disciples not to practice their acts of righteousness in the same way as the Pharisees, who love to be seen by men, for if you do, God will not reward them!

As the hypocrites V2, V5, + V16

When you giveV2 + V3

And when you pray V5, V7 + V7

When you fast V16 + V17

And why this difference in preaching and practice? JESUS is highlighting the awful, ungodly and false righteousness of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, with the correct biblical, God pleasing, Jesus honouring acts of righteousness that shine as light in a dark world and become like salt that preserves and adds taste, to a world that is rapidly decaying!

RESPONSIBILITY!

So what is fasting?

Why did the Pharisees fast?

Why did Jesus fast?

Why did his disciples initially not fast?

Why did Jesus' disciples eventually fast?

Why did Jesus teach us to fast?

Fasting is the voluntary decision to go without food for a specific period of time whilst using that time to pray to God about specific things, these could relate to past or present sin, where you have confessed and repented over that sin, but are showing God, how serious you are. It could be that you are seeking the Lord about specific things and choosing to go without food until those requests are answered.

To fast and to humble ourselves before God are virtually equivalent terms (Psalm 35:13, Isa Ch58:3-7).

The Pharisees fasted with wrong motivation Ch6:16, as they wanted to be seen and admired by men! JESUS not only taught His disciples about the need to fast, but fasted himself, Ch4:1-2, and Luke records for us that after this period of fasting and temptation, JESUS returned to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit” (Luke Ch4:14).

But despite this, JESUS' disciples did not initially fast – Matt Ch9:14 + Luke Ch5:33, and the reason being was that JESUS was still with them.. We see that after His departure His disciples practised fasting – Acts 13:2 + 14:23. JESUS expects us to fast, because in fasting we truly reveal who we are trying to please and why!

This side of eternity fasting is there for us to voluntarily deny our bodies physical food, and to seek God through prayer, for spiritual purposes.

REWARDS!

JESUS makes it clear that in regard to these three core spiritual acts of our worship, there is a particular way to perform them, and that in following JESUS' instructions, our Father in heaven will reward us - V1, V2, V5, + V16. The emphasis on doing these three things in secret – V4, V6 + V18, protects the real motive, i.e., that only God should know!

The reward then can reveal itself in a number of ways, firstly it is spiritual being between you and God, secondly, as you please God in this way, He will give you more to do!!!!!! More to give, more to pray about and more to fast about!!!! Thirdly, through these acts of righteousness being carried out in God's way there is on the inside for the Christian a Godly satisfaction, a growing closer to God!!!!

APPLICATION

Matthew Ch6:1-18 reveal three core areas of our worship to God, where we need to take responsibility for our acts of righteousness! JESUS not only sets out what they are, giving to the needy, praying and fasting, but sets out also how they should be undertaken in a Godly way.

Where and how can we make these three core areas, our areas for worship? The responsibility is ours! Reflect on where God has placed you and seek Him about these three core areas of our worship.