

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 11 February 2024. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The New Garment and New Bottle

Matthew 9:14-17

In first century Israel, there was, in the middle of the hill country of Galilee, a very large Greco-Roman metropolis called **Sepphoris**. Sepphoris is not mentioned by any of the Gospel writers, since Jesus spent most of His time in the small, Jewish towns near the Sea of Galilee; yet, this city was a mere four-mile walk from Nazareth, where Jesus grew up. This town, which was located on a major Roman highway called the *Via Maris*, was situated very prominently on a hilltop. In fact, it is believed that it is this hill which Jesus was using as an illustration when He said, ***“A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid”!***

Now, why is Sepphoris so important? Because it happened to be the epicenter of a huge Jewish revolt against Rome in 6 B.C. (when Jesus was still a toddler). A man named **Judas, the son of Ezekias** (who was also called “Judas of Galilee”) rose up at this time; and, with the backing of a prominent religious leader named Zadok the Pharisee, he drew a huge number of followers to fight against Rome. He formed a sect which he called “the fourth philosophy,” or “fourth sect,” of Judaism; and this sect became known as “the Zealots.” Judas led the Jews to rebel against Cyrenius, the Roman governor of Syria, in response to Rome’s census and taxation; and Judas made Sepphoris the base of his operations. However, his rebellion was completely crushed. The Roman forces burned the greater part of Sepphoris to the ground; crucified 2,000 rebels; sold 30,000 Jews into slavery; and brutally scattered the rest of them. Wives, husbands, parents, sons, and daughters were murdered, even if they hadn’t personally taken part in the revolt, so that they might be made examples to *anyone* who dared rebel against Rome!

Judas’s revolt was just one of many revolts that arose in Jesus’ lifetime. For example, there was **Simon of Paraea**, who, after Herod’s death in 4 B.C. (the year of Jesus’ birth), crowned himself “king of the Jews,” and waged war against Rome—only to be miserably defeated, and beheaded. That same year, a Jewish shepherd named **Anthronges** also claimed to be the King of the Jews; and, with his four brothers, he waged war against the governor Archelaus. He and his brothers were killed; and, since it was the time of Passover, Archelaus invaded Jerusalem, and mercilessly slaughtered thousands of Jewish worshippers!

Why am I telling these ghastly stories? Because there is something you need to understand about the times in which Jesus lived. Jesus lived in a time when *many* would-be “messiahs” were rising up, and being crushed; and although the people were longing for their Messiah to deliver them, they had, by the time of Jesus’ ministry, become extremely wary of anyone claiming to be the Messiah. They had learned that you do *not* mess with Rome! If you signed up with the wrong “messiah,” you would end up dead! It was in *this* extremely skeptical environment that a man named John the Baptist stood up, pointed to Jesus of Nazareth, and said, ***“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”*** Would the people believe this? Would they be willing to risk their *lives* to follow Jesus of Nazareth? If they were to follow Jesus, they had to be *very, very sure* that He was their Messiah!

This morning, we will learn about some people who came to Jesus, in the middle of a party, to ask Him an important question. Their question was in regard to fasting; but it went much deeper than that. The question *behind* the question was, “Are you *really* the Messiah? Can we *really* entrust our lives to you?” In answer to their question, Jesus said something profound. Jesus said that He had not come to *add* something on to the *Mosaic* Covenant; rather, He had come to establish something *entirely new*. The title of this message is ***The New Garment and New Bottle***.

Read Matthew 9:14-17.

I. The examination of Jesus (vv. 14-15)

In last week's message, we found that Jesus called a tax collector named Levi Matthew to be one of His disciples; and Matthew answered that call. Matthew was now hosting a party to celebrate the beginning of his new life as a follower of Jesus. The house was filled with Matthew's old tax collector buddies, whom he had invited to come and meet Jesus; and Jesus was speaking the words of eternal life to them. However, Jesus' old enemies, the Pharisees, soon showed up. They seemed to have been hanging around the *outskirts* of Matthew's party (since they didn't want to get too near those "sinners"); and they were there with an agenda. They were there specifically to stir up doubts in the minds of Jesus' disciples. Probably in whispering tones, when Jesus was looking the other way, they asked Jesus' disciples, "***Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?***" (By the way, Satan still uses this tactic to this day. He often sends lost people *into churches*, or to the *homes* of church members, to try to undermine their faith in Christ.) Now, as we saw last week, Jesus overheard the Pharisees, and answered their question. His answer to them was: "***I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.***" Jesus made it clear that people who *think* that they are righteous cannot be saved, because they don't think that they *need* to be saved! Only those who admit their sinfulness, and their need of Jesus, can receive grace and mercy from God.

Now, as the party continued, and as Jesus spoke to the guests, another question was put to Him. This time, the people who asked the question were actual *guests*. They weren't standing on the *outskirts* of the party, as the Pharisees apparently were doing: they were *inside* the house. However, it appears that these people were being *provoked* by the Pharisees to ask this question. (We'll talk more about that shortly.) This group of people was none other than **disciples of John the Baptist**. The disciples of John came to Jesus and asked, "***Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?***"

It doesn't sound as though these people really trusted Jesus, does it? Yet, these were the followers of *John the Baptist*—the very man whom God had chosen to *point people to Jesus!* A follower of John *should*, by definition, have also been a follower of Jesus. Why, then, were these disciples of John asking Jesus such a sharp, skeptical-sounding question?

I believe **Mark** gives us some good insight into that question. In **Mark 1**, Mark says that "***there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.***" Of course, that word "all" doesn't mean that *every* person in Israel was baptized. (The *Pharisees and Sadducees* certainly didn't receive John's baptism!) However, it does mean that *huge* crowds of people went out to hear John preach, and to be baptized. What, then, are we to make of this? Were *all* these people saved? No! Many people followed John with great enthusiasm; but they were not truly saved, because they were misinterpreting John's message, and hearing what they *wanted* to hear. Now, this doesn't mean that John was a failure. John did his best to make sure that those whom he baptised were true disciples. He did his best to make sure that they had truly repented of their sin, *and* believed on Jesus as Messiah. Those who truly believed John's message didn't struggle with leaving John and following Jesus: they simply took John at his word, and believed that Jesus is the Lamb of God, who would take away their sin!

Read Luke 3:7-17.

Read John 1:19-39 and 3:22-30.

As you can see, there were two kinds of “disciples of John.” On the one hand, there were those who had taken John’s message to heart, and placed their faith in Jesus. Of these folks, there were probably some who still loved Pastor John, and who still spent a lot of time sitting under his preaching; but they did truly believe on Jesus. On the other hand, there were many people who were not truly saved; and no matter how fervently John urged them to follow Jesus, they always viewed Jesus as a suspicious character, instead of as their Saviour.

Now, frankly, I find this hard to understand. *Why* did so many of John’s disciples refuse to place their faith in Jesus? After all, John was *commanding them* to place their faith in Jesus; and Jesus was *proving* His Messiahship by doing incredible miracles. Why, then, couldn’t they believe on Him? For several reasons.

First, they were expecting the Messiah to unite the people of Israel, and to lead them in conquest against the Romans. They expected Him to set up the Kingdom *now*: yet, it didn’t appear that Jesus had any such mission in mind. Instead of gathering an army, Jesus was going to the homes of tax collectors to eat with them. They didn’t understand that the Messiah has *two* missions, and *two* comings. In His first coming, He came to seek and to save the lost, and to die for our sins, and to rise again, so that we might be saved. It won’t be until Christ’s *second* coming that He will set up that glorious Kingdom that the prophets foretold. Of course, even Jesus’ *true* disciples didn’t yet understand all this; nevertheless, they *trusted* Jesus, and followed Him, even though they couldn’t yet understand all that He was teaching them about His mission. The *false* disciples of John, on the other hand, did *not* trust Him.

Why else did the disciples of John not want to follow Jesus? Because they feared man! It was one thing to follow John. After all, John had huge numbers of followers. (There’s strength in numbers, right?) Even the *Pharisees* had, for a time, pretended to follow John. However, it was another thing to follow Jesus. Jesus was intensely hated by the Pharisees. Could Jesus really be the Messiah, when even the religious rulers of Israel hated Him? They feared what would happen to them if Jesus turned out *not* to be the Messiah! No matter how many miracles Jesus did, they couldn’t shake the memory of those 2,000 followers of Judas of Galilee, who had been crucified only 4 miles from Jesus’ hometown! Furthermore, this Jesus was meek in spirit. He did not lift up His voice in a loud, bombastic, forceful way. John had a fiery personality: but this Jesus wouldn’t even run after those who rejected Him, to try to persuade them to stay. Was He really “Messiah material”? Could they be *sure* that if they followed this Jesus, they wouldn’t end up on crosses, as had happened to Judas’s followers?

However, the biggest reason why so many of John’s “disciples” couldn’t bring themselves to follow Jesus is that they were filled with *self-righteousness*. They admired the Pharisees’ fasting, because it made them appear like holy men. On the other hand, when they looked at Jesus, they saw Him *feasting* with people, instead of *fasting*! This didn’t fit with the “holy” persona that they wanted to have. Like the Pharisees, they wanted others to look at them and say, “Wow! See how holy they are!”

So, then, we are faced with a question: were the disciples of John, who came to Jesus at Matthew’s party, *real believers*? Or were they false believers, who had misunderstood John’s

message? There may have been some who *were* true believers, but who *had* been wondering, in the back of their minds, why Jesus was always feasting, instead of fasting; but probably most of them were false believers. One thing is for sure, though: if there *were* some true believers among them, they were *provoked* to ask this question by the Pharisees! In **Mark 2**, Mark says that the disciples of John *and* of the Pharisees asked this question of Jesus; and in **Luke 5**, Luke says that the *Pharisees themselves* asked Jesus this question! When we put all three of these passages together, we get the whole picture: the Pharisees whispered questions among the crowd, which got the disciples of John all riled up; and then, as the pot heated to a boil, *all* of them (Pharisees included) came to Jesus. With this in mind, let's examine the question that they asked. **(Read Matthew 9:14 again.)**

There are several things I would like to point out here. First, you'll notice that John's disciples never actually stated that John had *commanded* them to fast often. *John himself* fasted often, because he had a tremendous burden upon him—the task of preparing the people's hearts to believe on the Messiah! The fate of a nation was at stake: and, as far as John knew, the Messiah would be setting up the Kingdom at any time! (In fact, the Kingdom *could* have come within their lifetimes, if the people had repented!) John *did* personally spend much time fasting; and John's disciples followed his example. However, it is never said that John *commanded* people to fast for a certain number of days out of every week.

Secondly, we know that Jesus Himself *did* fast. He fasted for the first forty days of His earthly ministry; and in the Sermon on the Mount (in **Matthew 6**), He taught His *disciples* to fast, as well. The difference between Jesus' disciples and the Pharisees' disciples is that Jesus' disciples *hid* their fasting from others: whereas the Pharisees, being the hypocrites they were, let *everyone know* that they were fasting, so as to be admired by others! If the disciples of John had examined Jesus' teaching more carefully, they would have realised that Jesus and His disciples *did* fast at times—but for a completely different reason! The Pharisees did it to be seen of men; but Jesus' disciples did it to draw their hearts to God in true repentance.

The issue, then, was *not* that “John's disciples fast, and Jesus' disciples don't fast at all”: rather, the issue was that **“Jesus' disciples fast less than John's do.”** Yet, *why* did Jesus not fast so much? Why *did* Jesus spend quite a bit of time feasting? Let's look again at Jesus' answer to that question. **(Read Matthew 9:15 again.)**

Do you see the character of Jesus in His response here? Jesus *could* have defended Himself. He *could* have indignantly retorted, “That's not true! My disciples and I *do* fast!” Yet, He didn't. Instead, He spoke calmly; and He said something very beautiful. He said, **“*Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?*”** Folks, do you realise what Jesus is saying by calling Himself the “Bridegroom”? This “Bridegroom” metaphor comes straight from Old Testament Scripture; and in every passage where it is used, it is *God Himself* who is calling Himself “the Bridegroom”! Let's look at an example.

Read Psalm 45:1-17.

My friends, do you realise how profound this passage is? David says that the Anointed One (the Messiah) is *God*; and He is also the *Bridegroom*. He is the one who left the **“*ivory palaces*”** of Heaven to seek His bride; and someday, He will join Himself to her forever! We see the same thing in **Isaiah 62:5**, where Isaiah says, **“*For as a young man marrieth a virgin,***

so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” In **Hosea 2:20**, the LORD Himself says, **“I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.”** By calling Himself “the Bridegroom,” Jesus is calling Himself *Messiah*, and *God*; and He is calling His disciples the **“children of the bridechamber”** (His “groomsmen”). What a beautiful picture!

Yet, in this metaphor, we find some troubling words: Jesus says that a day was coming when the Bridegroom would be **“taken”** from them. What does Jesus mean by this statement? To understand the full implications of what Jesus is saying, you need to know how Jewish weddings (and, particularly, *Galilean* weddings) worked. I will describe it in a nutshell.

A Galilean wedding began with **“betrothal.”** The betrothal between a man and woman was made at the main gate of the city. The man and his beloved gathered at the gate; and everyone who happened to hear the announcement of the betrothal would gather around, to act as witnesses. A written covenant of marriage was read aloud; and both the groom and the bride were then asked, “Do you agree to these terms?” They each said, “We do.”¹ Gifts were then exchanged between the man and his beloved; and a dowry was paid to the girl’s father.² However, the big moment was when the man took a ceremonial cup, and handed it to his bride. This cup was called “the cup of joy.” When that cup was placed in her hand, she had the power to *accept or reject* the proposal of marriage. It was *her choice*. She could stop the wedding if she wished; and the way to stop it was simply to push the cup back toward the groom.³ If she *drank* from the cup, it was final: they were now officially husband and wife. The bridegroom then drank from the cup, as well; and he publicly said, “I am now consecrated to you by the laws of Moses, **and I will not drink of this cup again until I drink it anew with you in my father’s house.**”⁴

Now, this was merely the beginning of about a year-long process. The groom and bride were *officially* married, but not *living* together physically. The bride would work on sewing an elaborate wedding dress; and the man would build an extra room onto his father’s house, for him and his bride. He would procure furniture, cups, pots, bowls, and other household items, as well. He also purchased everything that was needed for the wedding feast. However, until the day of the wedding feast, the groom and his betrothed had to live apart. In all that time, no one knew the exact day or hour when the wedding would take place. It was the father who would, at such a time as pleased him, say, “Son, go get your bride.”⁵

Now, as the time drew near, the bride would sleep in her wedding dress; and her bridesmaids slept right by her, in their white linen garments. The bride *had* to be ready for her bridegroom to collect her; and the time of his arrival would *always* be sometime in the middle of the night, or in the wee morning hours. On the day and hour that the father chose, the father would awaken his son and say, “It is time.” The son would then quickly gather his groomsmen, and grab his shofar horn; and they would go out into the streets of the village, toward the bride’s house. As they walked, the son would blow the horn, and awaken the village; but only those who were prepared to rise quickly, and who had their lamps trimmed, would have time to join the bridal party. The groomsmen would be carrying a “litter” (a portable seat, which was carried by two men); and when the bride came out of her house, she would lower herself onto the seat. The men would then *lift her up off the ground*, and *carry* her to her father-in-law’s house! (She didn’t *walk* to the father’s house: she was *lifted*, and *carried*!) The Jews referred to this as **“flying the bride to the father’s house.”**⁶ After they arrived at the father’s house,

the door to the feast was shut; and those who were not in the house **were not allowed in under any circumstance!** (This was peculiar to Galilean weddings!) The wedding feast was held for **seven days and nights**; and when the man and his beloved emerged from the house seven days later, all the world could then see that they were husband and wife!⁷

My friends, if you have been reading your Bible for very long, it is not hard for you to see that the Galilean wedding arrangements were a *giant prophetic picture* of things to come! When Christ came to His people 2,000 years ago, the “covenant of marriage” was proclaimed. Jeremiah prophesied of this covenant in **Jeremiah 31**, when he said, ***“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.”*** However, the only way that this “New Covenant” could be ratified was with the blood of the Bridegroom Himself. That is why Jesus, at the Last Supper, took the cup of grape juice, and told His disciples, ***“Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”*** He then quoted those familiar words from the Galilean wedding covenant, and applied them to Himself: ***“I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”***

For now, Jesus has gone away to His Father’s House in Heaven; however, Jesus promised, ***“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”*** Right now, Jesus is preparing a place for His bride (all of us who are saved) in His Father’s House; and one day, *He will come back for us*, at a day and hour that we know not. It will be swift, and sudden; and *only those who are prepared*, by personally repenting of their sin and believing on Christ, will be taken to the wedding feast. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the trumpet will sound; and all those who were in Christ (both the dead and the living) will receive glorified, resurrected bodies, and will be *lifted up into the air*, and flown away to the Father’s house in Heaven. Then will begin a *seven-year* wedding feast in Heaven, in the chambers of the Father’s House: but on earth, for those who were *not ready*, it will be a time of horrific judgments. That is why, in **Isaiah 26:20-21**, the LORD warns the people of Israel (and of the world), ***“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.”***

Do you see now what Jesus meant when He said that the ***“bridegroom shall be taken from them”***? This statement has two levels of meaning. First, **Jesus was hinting at His death**. During His three and a half years of ministry, Jesus had been eating and feasting with His disciples, just like a groom who eats breakfast with his groomsmen on the morning of his wedding; but then, all of a sudden, His life was taken away from Him—and right before the “wedding”! The Kingdom of Heaven *was “at hand”*; but then, tragically, it *wasn’t*. (It’s like those tragic stories you hear about a man who dies on the morning of his wedding.) However, in Jesus’ case, there was one big exception: the Bridegroom didn’t stay dead! Three days after His crucifixion, He arose from the grave! Nevertheless, the wedding is still “on hold.” That’s where the *second* level of meaning comes in. Jesus wasn’t merely hinting at His death: He was also hinting at the fact that **He would go back to His Father’s house for some unknown period of time**. That first three and a half years of the “betrothal” with our Lord has been prolonged to 2,000 years, and counting! For two thousand years now, God’s people have been waiting, weeping, mourning, and fasting, because they long for the day when their trials will be over, and they will be united with their Lord. However, one day, Jesus *will* come back for His bride, in the event that we call “the Rapture”; and we will be taken into the Father’s

heavenly chambers, for seven years (the years of the great Tribulation period down on earth). At the end of those seven years, Christ will return to earth in glory, to set up His Kingdom; and He will live with His bride for 1,000 glorious years. From there, He will *continue* to be with His bride for all eternity, in the new heaven and new earth!

II. The explanation of the New Covenant (vv. 16-17)

(Read verses 16 and 17 again.) As we read these verses, it is important to keep in mind what the disciples of John had just asked Jesus. They had asked Jesus why *they* fasted often, yet *His* disciples did not fast often. Jesus responded by saying that people at a wedding feast don't fast while the bridegroom is still with them; and likewise, *His* disciples were not fasting while He, the Bridegroom, was still with them (although they *would* fast after He was taken from them). However, this wasn't the end of Jesus' explanation. John's (and Jesus') disciples needed to understand that many more big changes were coming in the near future. Why? Because the New Covenant, which the prophet Jeremiah foretold, had finally arrived!

Read Jeremiah 31:31-33.

Jesus gave this parable about an old garment, and an old wine bottle, to illustrate the New Covenant that He has made with Israel. The kind of "bottle" that Jesus is talking about is not a glass or clay bottle, but what we would call a "pouch" today. These pouches were made of the stomach of an animal; and they were covered on the outside with animal skin. Obviously, such a bottle, once torn, could never hold anything again. Similarly, a garment, after it is worn thin, and torn, can never truly be patched up. The word for "**old**" is *palaios*, which not only refers to something that is *old*, but to something that is worn thin by constant use.

Jesus' illustration would have been very easy for His hearers to understand. Everyone knew that you cannot "fix" a wine skin bottle that has developed a tear in it, because it is too elastic. Any attempt to fix it would only make it worse. Any liquid poured into it will only make the tear bigger; and the wine will run out. The bottle must be discarded, and you must get an entirely new one. The old and the new *cannot* be mixed. Likewise, Christ and His teaching cannot simply be "added on" to the Old Testament Law. To do so would be like trying to add a new patch to a torn garment, or like pouring fresh grape juice into a torn wine skin bottle.

By the way, when Jesus talked about the "**new**" cloth and the "**new**" bottles, He was using two different Greek words for "new." He used the word *kainon* (which means "new in *quality*") and the word *neon* (which means "new in *time*"). The word *neon* is used to describe the *wine*; and the word *kainous* is used to describe the wineskins! Jesus' point is that the New Covenant is new both in *time* and in *quality*. It is something entirely new, in every way. The Old Covenant that God had made with Israel on Mount Sinai had served its purpose, and had "worn thin," after 1,400 years of use. Jesus had not come to add on a few more things to the Old Covenant: He had come to establish something entirely new!

Read Matthew 26:26-28.

Read Hebrews 10:1-18.

The New Covenant truly is “new.” Christ came to *fulfill* the Old Covenant by paying for our sins on the cross, and thus fulfilling all the prophecies of Himself. The Old Covenant had served its purpose. Christ came to establish a *New* Covenant, which is based on His own blood, and not on the blood of animals. Those who try to cling to Old Testament rituals *and* to Christ will, almost inevitably, end up with a works salvation, instead of the true Gospel of salvation by God’s grace alone. Many false religions have sprung up because Christians began to practice Law rituals that God has set aside (such as Sabbaths and Old Testament feasts); and their “converts” soon took it to the next step, and began to teach that these things *are necessary for salvation*. This was the whole reason why it was necessary for Paul to write to the churches of Galatia. They had been duped into believing that circumcision is necessary for salvation; and thus, they had embraced a false gospel.

This “Judaizing” effect is still felt today, in what is called the “Hebrew Roots” movement. While it is important to know the prophetic meaning and spiritual pictures behind the Old Testament feasts and rituals, we must be very careful not to impose Old Testament rituals, which were meant for Old Testament Israel, upon New Testament-age believers. One well-known teacher named **Mark Biltz**, while professing faith in Jesus as the Messiah, also claims that *he does not desire to convert Jews*. On his web site he says, “We do not want to convert Jews to Christianity, or Christians to Judaism. The Scriptures say: The LORD will magnify the Torah, and make it honorable. And those that love Torah will have great peace.”⁸ While it is true that those who love God’s Law will have great peace, Biltz failed to mention that Jesus *is* our Peace; that He is our Peace because He *fulfilled the Law for us*; and that if you don’t know Jesus, you cannot know peace!

Brethren, anyone who says that it is *necessary* for New Testament saints to practice the Sabbaths and Old Testament feasts is on the fast-track toward apostasy; and anyone who says that he has no desire to convert lost and perishing Jews is someone who should be shunned as a false teacher. The Apostle Paul was so burdened for the salvation of His Jewish brethren, that he was filled with “great heaviness and continual sorrow” for them! Do *you* have that kind of burden for the lost, Christian? Do you love people enough to tell them that law-keeping (whether it be Old Testament ceremonial laws, or some other laws) cannot get them into Heaven? They must hear the message of the **New** Testament—that Jesus saves!

Conclusion: Jesus came to establish a *New* Covenant with Israel; and those of us who are saved (whether we be Jew *or* Gentile) are partaking in the spiritual blessing of salvation, which is provided by the New Covenant! However, the blessing of salvation is not *forced* upon anyone. One must *receive* it. Just as the woman at the gate had to *drink* the cup of marriage in order to be betrothed to the groom, so each soul must *drink* of the cup of salvation in order to become part of Christ’s Bride. *Almost* drinking isn’t drinking at all: you *must*, by faith, drink of it! You must *choose* what you will do with Christ! Perhaps you, like many of John’s disciples, have *not* drunk of that cup, because you are afraid of what it would mean for your future in this world. You *like* much of what you hear from God’s Word; but you aren’t sure that you can entrust your *life* to Jesus. “How would my friends and family react? And what would it mean for my plans for the future? I like being in control of my own life!” If these be the questions that are going through your mind, I am here to tell you that there is no greater joy than in knowing and serving Jesus! Please place your faith in Him today! For those of you who are saved, I would remind you that *Jesus is coming back for His bride*; and until He comes back, we have work to do for Him! *Love* Him with your whole heart, Christian! Trust Him, and serve Him wholly!

¹ “Before the Wrath,” Kevin Sorbo, Ingenuity Films, 2020.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Dr. David Cloud, “The Four Blood Moon Speculation,” Way of Life Literature, September 28, 2015, www.wayoflife.org