

MARK 2:21-22

RECEIVE GODLY EXPECTATIONS

²¹ *"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. ²² And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins."*

What is Jesus talking about? What is the context of these comments about old garments and new cloth and new wine and old wine skins? Is he telling us that everything old needs to be rejected and replaced with what is new? If that is the case, then every generation would have to remake the church. This does not ring true when I read Jesus' command at the Last Supper; "Whenever you do this, do it in remembrance of me." Again, the statement that *all Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16-17), is inconsistent with wholesale change.

I think the pivotal image here for understanding his message is that of the Messiah. Jesus goes from speaking about being the bridegroom, a messianic metaphor, to this strange discussion of the new versus the old. The idea is that the new is so much different from than the old that the old cannot define it. Indeed, the new will destroy the old. The problem for the Pharisees is that their expectations for the Messiah were so small and rigid that the reality of the Messiah will obliterate them. In counseling couples, one of the root causes for dissatisfaction in a relationship is unrealized, unrealistic expectations of the other member of the couple. Jesus knew that he did not fit their expectations for the Messiah, and therefore, he was warning them to be flexible with their own expectations so they would not preclude the reality and miss their Messiah. The message of Jesus is that we need to hold on to our expectations loosely, while maintaining a firm grip on the truth of Scripture. As vessels of the Holy Spirit may we always keep ourselves new in readiness for his revelation.

Holy Spirit, keep my mind, my heart and my will open to the possibility of your expanding my understanding and my experience of the truth. Help me not to limit my reception of your revelation by refusing to let go of my pat answers and pet expectations. Thank you for giving me the Scriptures as a measure and boundary for receiving and recognizing your guidance. Amen.