

Fasting

Understanding its significance



Lincoln Declares National Fast

Abraham Lincoln set apart Thursday the 30th day of April 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting, and prayer.

Lincoln wrote: "It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.

"The awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people.

"Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity, too proud to pray to the God that made us.

"It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."

Tan, P. L. *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations* : Garland TX: Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

Fasting Is To God

- ◆ **Zechariah 7:5** *""Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted?'"*
- ◆ **Matthew 6:16-18** *""Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. "But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. ""*

Fasting Has Little Value In Itself

- ◆ **Isaiah 58:3-7** *'Why have we fasted and You do not see? Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?' Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire, And drive hard all your workers.
4 "Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high.
5 "Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one's head like a reed And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the Lord?
6 "Is this not the fast which I choose, To loosen the bonds of wickedness, To undo the bands of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free And break every yoke?
7 "Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry And bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh?*

Observed In Times of Sorrow

- ◆ **2 Samuel 1:12** *"They mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan and for the people of the Lord and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. "*
- ◆ **2 Samuel 12:16** *"David therefore inquired of God for the child; and David fasted and went and lay all night on the ground. "*
- ◆ **Esther 4:3** *"In each and every province where the command and decree of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing; and many lay on sackcloth and ashes. "*

Observed When Mourning Over Sin

- ◆ **1 Samuel 7:6** *"They gathered to Mizpah, and drew water and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day and said there, "We have sinned against the Lord." And Samuel judged the sons of Israel at Mizpah. "*
- ◆ **Nehemiah 9:1-2** *"Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the sons of Israel assembled with fasting, in sackcloth and with dirt upon them. The descendants of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. "*
- ◆ **Joel 2:12** *"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning; "*

Joined With Humility & Prayer

- ◆ **Psalm 35:13** *"But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting, And my prayer kept returning to my bosom. "*
- ◆ **Ezra 8:21-23** *"Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions. For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, "The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him." So we fasted and sought our God concerning this matter, and He listened to our entreaty. "*

When Will Jesus Disciples Fast?

- ◆ **Matthew 9:14-15** *"Then the disciples of John came to Him, asking, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. "*
- ◆ **Acts 13:2-3** *"While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. "*
- ◆ **Acts 14:23** *"When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. "*