

WHEN SHOULD THE CHRISTIAN FAST?

Biblical Fasts with Significance for Today

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT FAST

The 10th day of the 7th month was set aside as a day of public fasting and humiliation for the nation of Israel to seek atonement (at-one-ment) for its sins (Lev. 23:24; 16:29; Num. 29:7). It was the only fast required by the law of Moses.

Jesus, our Savior, paid with His life for our sins, but on occasion in the life of Christians there is ***the need for deep soul searching and the crying out unto our Father for forgiveness and deliverance from the power of sin*** by a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit. A season of fasting and repentant prayer may be in order. (1 John 1:9)

THE MOSES FAST

Moses did not eat bread or drink water during the 40 days and nights he was on Mt. Sinai seeking the word of the Lord (all of Ex. 34, especially v. 28). The 10 Commandments were one of the results.

Seeking direction from the Lord, getting “a word from the Lord,” at a critical time in the believer’s life may involve an extended time in the Scriptures, with prayer and fasting.

THE PHINEHAS FAST

The ***need for very specific guidance from the Lord in a time of crisis*** may call forth a season of fasting and prayer (Judges 20:26-28).

THE JEHOSHOPHAT FAST

Jehoshophat called for a fast throughout all Israel when threatened by the overwhelming odds of his enemies. He confessed to the Lord that he and his people were ***powerless*** before such an army and ***did not know what to do***, but that ***their eyes were fixed on Him***. What a story in 2 Chronicles 20!

Feeling similarly, the believer may need to do as this king did.

THE EZRA FAST

Those about to return from the Babylonian captivity with Ezra fasted at the river of Ahava seeking the Lord’s protection and provision on the journey (Ezra 8:21-23).

The need for protection and provision on a God-appointed mission may be met through a fast.

THE ESTHER FAST

Queen Esther and the Jews of Susa fasted when faced with the annihilation planned by wicked Haman (Esther 4:3, 15, 16).

When the forces of darkness threaten God’s people through schemes of governmental official, laws, judges, governors or the like, a fast is in order.

THE DAVID FAST

David fasted after hearing that Saul and Jonathan were dead (2 Samuel 1:12). A 7 day fast was held when the bones of Saul and his sons were buried (1 Samuel 31:13). David also fasted during the illness of the child born to Bathsheba as a result of their adultery, grieving over his sin and pleading for mercy for the child (2 Samuel 12:23).

Fasting fits ***a time of intense grieving and longing for the Lord's mercy.***

THE DANIEL FAST

Trapped by God's judgment on the sins of his fathers, carried away captive into a foreign land as a consequence of their sins, Daniel prays for the judgment to lift (Daniel 9).

Pleading for the Lord to show forth His mercy, repenting of the sins of his/her "fathers," and praying for the remaining effects of God's judgment to be removed, the believer may be led to enter into a fast.

THE JOEL FAST

Joel saw in a vision the judgment of God coming in all its fury unless the people genuinely and deeply repented. He pled with them to show forth the depth of their changed hearts toward God by humbling themselves with fasting (Joel 1:14 and all of chapter 2).

To avert the coming outpouring of God's anger against sin, the church or the individual believer may be strongly drawn to fast with the prayer that the judgment deserved will, by the mercy of God, be withheld.

THE ANNA FAST

Anna, the 84 year old widow, ministered unto the Lord in the Temple "with fastings and prayers night and day" (Luke 2:37).

With no special reason other than the desire to bless and please the Father, believers may be led as Anna was to regularly minister unto the Lord by fasting.

THE ANTIOCH FAST

The church in Antioch was ministering unto the Lord with fasting when the Spirit spoke and instructed the group to set apart Saul and Barnabus for the work to which He had called them – to go to the Gentiles outside the Jewish home-land with the Gospel (Acts 13:1-3).

Again, when there is ***the desire to bless and please the Lord,*** fasting is in order. ***It may often happen that during these times, the Spirit may speak specific instructions that will have far-reaching impact for the Kingdom.***

THE ELDER FAST

Paul and Barnabus prayed with fasting at the appointment of elders in the churches (Acts 14:23).

Here as in the case above, fasting seems to be associated with not only ***discerning the will of God for significant Kingdom decisions but also for securing the anointing of the Spirit for the accomplishing of the assigned tasks.***