

## BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS ABOUT FASTING

1. **II Samuel 1:21** David's little child was ill. **He fasted for 7 days** and told his servants, "...while he was alive I fasted and wept. **Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me that my child may live?** So, from this we see that David had some knowledge or experience that taught him when circumstances are critical or needs for Divine intervention are necessary for a happy ending to a situation – fasting and prayer (humiliation before God) is the thing to do.
2. **In II Chronicles 20**, we read where Jehoshaphat was expecting to be attacked by the Moabites and the Ammonites and he was afraid. **So he proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah**. People came out of all the cities of Judah – even wives and children to do what?
  - a. To seek the Lord
  - b. Unite in declaring God to be their God
  - c. To fast and pray

What happened? God told them, "Don't be afraid. The battle is not yours, but God's." What encouragement!

God spoke. He said:

- a. You won't need to fight.
  - b. Just stand still and watch God work.
  - c. I'll tell you what to do and how to do it.
  - d. He appointed **singers**, not soldiers. They began to sing and Praise God! They won!
3. **Ezekiel 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> chapters**: Ezra is a great spiritual leader. He asks permission of the king to take a copy of God's laws to Judah and Jerusalem. He wants to bring back a report of the religious progress being made there. He was also to take some gold and silver as an offering to the God of Israel. So, Ezra gathered a large group of people and priests to go along – some 220 men from many districts.

Then what? Ezra asked these leaders to join him in humbling themselves before God prior to the trip. They **fasted and prayed** for a safe trip, for deliverance from bandits on the way, for the safe keeping of their children. It says, "...that we might afflict ourselves before our God to seek of Him a right way for us.... God protected us and saved us from our enemies and bandits along the way. We arrived safely in Jerusalem." vs. 12

4. **Esther 4**: A plot to kill all Jews, including women and children, was made by the king and this word was taken to all the provinces. The date was set for February 28 of the following year.

In all the provinces there was great mourning among the Jews, **fasting**, weeping and despair at the king's decree.

Then Esther, the queen, got involved. She heard the whole story from her cousin, Mordecai. So she asked Mordecai to gather all the Jews and fast for her – **do not eat or drink for 3 days**. Esther and her maids also **fasted**.

"Then", she said, "though it is strictly forbidden, I will go into the king to make my request." She did and the king gave her favor. He spared Mordecai from being hung on a gallows at the hand of Haman.

In addition, the king reversed Haman's decree to destroy the Jews throughout all the king's provinces. The Jews chose the very same day, February 28, to celebrate their victory.

**Would it have happened this way without the fasting and prayer?**

5. **Isaiah 58:3**: This elegant chapter shows us the contrast between God's and man's ideas about fasting. Man said to God: "We have fasted before you. Why aren't you impressed? Why don't you hear our prayers. We've done much penance and you don't even notice!"

God quickly answered them. "Because you are living in evil pleasure while you are fasting. You keep on fighting and quarreling! This kind of fasting will get you nowhere with me. ... The kind of fast I want is that you stop oppressing those who work for you, give your employees what they have earned; share your food with the hungry; bring them right into your homes; feed the helpless, poor and destitute; clothe those who are cold and don't hide from your relatives who need help!"

Now, listen to this:

God said, "If you do these things:

- a. God will shed His own glorious light upon you.
- b. He will heal you.
- c. Your Godliness will lead you forward.
- d. Goodness will be a shield before you.
- e. The glory of the Lord will protect you from behind.
- f. When you call, the Lord will answer.
- g. Your light will shine out from the darkness.
- h. You shall be as bright as day.
- i. The Lord will guide you continually.
- j. The Lord will satisfy you with all good things and keep you healthy.
- k. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an everlasting spring.
- l. You will be known as "The People Who Rebuild Their Walls and Cities."

To me, this is another illustration of how great God's generosity is in relation to the little He requires of us!

#### **Do you recognize the depth of this teaching?**

God is really showing them their own hypocrisy. And in addition, their wickedness. The people had a form of religion. They appeared to be godly. But they used their fast days to work on their business bookkeeping, to pay their bills, etc.

I recently heard a message from Dr. D. James Kennedy that contained a description of the hypocrisy of Christians in our day. He said God told him to tell the people: "Change your behavior or change your name."

That's harsh, eh?

6. **Jeremiah 14:** This is a case history of a situation where God told Jeremiah, the prophet:
- a. Don't pray for these people anymore.
  - b. Don't ask me to bless them.
  - c. They have not tried to follow my ways.

**It is a sober thought that we can wander away from God so far that He will refuse to bless us, even if we fast and pray.**

7. **Joel 1,2 & 3:** In these chapters we learn about the terrible conditions of the land at this time in history. All the crops failed. The cattle were without food and water. There was not even any meat offering or drink offering for the priests.

Joel told them to sanctify a fast. "Who knows? Perhaps even yet God will decide to let you alone and give you a blessing instead of His terrible curse. Perhaps He will give you so much you can offer your grain and wine to the Lord as before." vs.14

"Sound the trumpet in Zion! Call a fast and gather all the people together for a solemn meeting. Bring everyone – the elders, the children and even the babies.

“The priests and the ministers of God will stand between the people and the altar, weeping. They will pray, Spare the people, O, our God. Don't let them be disgraced. Don't let us be a laughing stock....”

**What happened?**

The Lord did a mighty miracle. Everything was restored. He gave them back the crops that the locusts had eaten. Once again they had all the food they wanted.

“Praise the Lord who does these miracles for you. Never again will your people experience disaster such as this. I alone am your Lord and God.”  
vs.26-27

8. **Jonah 3: 5-7** In this story, God told Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and tell them that they were going to be destroyed because of their wickedness.

But the very day that Jonah entered into Nineveh and began to preach that they were going to be destroyed in 40 days, the people repented. The people declared a fast. Everyone put on sackcloth, rough course garments worn at times of mourning. They cried mightily to God. They said, “Who can tell? Perhaps even yet God will decide to let us live and will hold back His fierce anger from destroying us.

“And when God saw that they had put a stop to their evil ways, He abandoned His plan to destroy them and didn't carry it through.” Jonah 3:30.

**Prayer and fasting is the answer.**