

GENESIS  
REVELATION TV

**PRAYER &  
FASTING**

# INTRODUCTION

## PRAYER & FASTING

*A call to the staff and viewers of Genesis TV and Revelation TV  
to fast and pray for three days.*

***Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 2010***

*For The nation, for the channels and for the individual needs of viewers*

If you have never fasted before, the idea of fasting may seem terrifying. Years ago when I heard of people who were fasting for more than 2 or 3 days, I would try and persuade them not to, in case they harmed themselves. One of my problems was that I had not learned the difference between fasting and starving - and the two are not related. A hunger striker deliberately abstains from food with a view to starving to death, or at least abstaining from food long enough to cause others to express concern that that they are starving to death! A person who is fasting correctly will never starve. Even people who have fasted for prolonged periods will not harm their body if they break their fast in the correct way.

Christians who have fasted and prayed, both in the Bible, and in modern day history, in accordance with the will of God, have seen the most wonderful results, as God has intervened and answered their prayers. We hope you will be excited and challenged as you read this paper to fast and pray.

**Fasting and praying is God's heartbeat. And we need to allow our hearts to beat in time with His.**

The Bible describes five different kinds of fasts:

### **1. Normal Fast**

In Scripture fasting normally means abstaining from all food, solid or liquid but not from water. So far as drink is concerned, water is basic. Some add tea or coffee. Some add fruit juice. A milk shake would be considered too far and not in the spirit of fasting!

## **2. Partial Fast**

A variation of the above is called a partial fast where food is restricted but not totally abstained from. The prophet Daniel wrote 'I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over. (Daniel 10.3)

## **3. Absolute Fast**

In times of special need there are examples in Scripture of 'absolute fasts' where both food and water are abstained from. The human body cannot go longer than three days without water and therefore these fasts do not last beyond that point. The first thing that the Apostle Paul did after his encounter with the Lord on the Road to Damascus was not to eat or drink anything for a period of three days.

When the Jewish people faced extermination by an edict of King Xerxes, the Queen, Esther, agreed to go and petition the king on behalf of the Jewish people. However she first instructed her fellow Jews to fast. She told them '*Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do*'. (Esther 4.16)

## **4. Supernatural Absolute Fast**

When a fast from food and water goes beyond three days it is called a supernatural absolute fast. It has to be supernatural, for in normal circumstances, the earthly body cannot sustain life if it does not receive water at the three-day stage. Both Moses and Elijah, but not Christ, undertook such fasts. Moses went without both food and water for 40 days whilst on Mount Sinai receiving the 10 Commandments.

## **5. Public Fast**

Fasting is normally a private matter, or one that is shared with a few friends, whom you know will support you in prayer during your fast. However there are times when a fast needs to be made public and done with others as a corporate matter. The Lord instructed the Jews to hold a public fast every year on the Day of Atonement. When Jonah preached to the city of Nineveh about the coming judgement of God, we are told that the entire city, including the animals, fasted, and did not eat or drink. In the New Testament, the setting aside of Paul and Barnabas for their missionary journey was done with worship and fasting.

# EXAMPLES OF FASTS IN THE BIBLE

## Army Defeated Without a Shot Being Fired

2 Chronicles 20 records one of the strangest battles fought in the history of the world. King Jehoshaphet and the Jewish people were facing attack from the armies of the Moabites and the Ammonites (today the Syrian area). King Jehoshaphet had every reason to be terrified. His army was no match for the forces moving against him. The King knew that the opposing armies were far stronger than his. What could he do? The Scriptures tell us:

*'Alarmed Jehoshaphet resolved to enquire of the Lord and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. ... The people came from every town in Judah to seek the Lord ... all the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones stood there before the Lord.'*

**2 Chronicles 20**

Can you imagine the delight of the Lord at seeing whole families, from grandparents to babes in arms, worshipping, fasting and praying before Him? God gave those Jewish people specific instructions on what to do about the enemy around them. The next day they followed the Lord's battle plan, and victory was theirs.

## A Nation Saved From Total Destruction

The Jewish people faced an even worse crisis when King Xerxes was ruler of the Persian Empire from 486 to 465 BC and the Jews were under his control. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, Hitler had about a third of all the Jews at his mercy. King Xerxes had almost the entire Jewish nation under his control and he was persuaded by his Second-in-Command, to issue an edict that on a certain day, the entire Jewish people were to be killed. What the King did not know was that his beautiful wife Esther was also a Jew.

The Jewish leaders told Queen Esther that she had to help. She realized that she needed to go and confront the King about his edict. The problem was that nobody, including the Queen, could go into the King's presence unless they were invited, and Queen Esther had not been invited in the last thirty days! To go into the King's presence without permission could mean death unless the King nodded his approval as you entered the throne room. What Esther decided to do, has been called by

Derek Prince an example of the power of prayer and fasting to change history. Let's see what she decided to do.

She sent a message to her Jewish uncle, Mordecia: 'go gather together all the Jews who are in Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night and day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done I will go to the King, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I will perish'. The Scriptures tell us that Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.

All of the Jewish people in Susa, together with Queen Esther and her maids fasted and prayed for three days – seventy two hours – without any food or drink passing their lips. At the end of the fast, she went into the King's presence. As the King saw her enter, he beckoned her to himself.

The remaining chapters of the book of Esther – chapters 5 to 10 - record the remarkable change in the policy of the Persian Empire in favour of the Jewish people, none of whom were killed. Queen Esther and her Uncle Mordecia became two of the most influential people in the Persian government, and the Jewish people experienced peace, prosperity and favour.

And it all started when a group of people fasted from food and drink for three days.

# CHRIST'S EXAMPLE AND TEACHING ON FASTING

Immediately after Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan by John, he was led by the Spirit to go into the desert. There for a period of forty days he fasted. We sometimes forget the humanity of Jesus. Forty days of no food would bring the same difficulties for Jesus that any of us would experience. Both Matthew and Luke emphasize the hunger that Jesus experienced. There is no mention of Jesus being thirsty. We therefore assume that Jesus fasted from food, but not from water.

The only way we can know about Jesus' fast must be because Jesus talked about it to his disciples. He went into the desert alone. No one was with him to record it happening. The fact that Jesus talked about it to his disciples places greater significance on it and the importance it had in Jesus' life.

Jesus fast came immediately before he started his public ministry. It is as if it was the final preparation he had to go through before starting his public ministry. If fasting was such an important part of Jesus' final preparation for ministry, how much more fasting should play an important part as we prepare to do God's work.

## **Not if ... but when**

In what we call the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapter 5 to 7, Jesus gives some very tough teaching to His disciples on practical matters such as adultery, divorce, accumulating wealth, and how to overcome worry and anxiety. In the midst of this teaching, he gives specific instructions to his followers concerning three things – giving to the poor, praying, and fasting.

It is strange that we have no problem in obeying Christ's command to give to the poor and in spending time in praying. But think that when it comes to fasting, that it is an optional extra. Jesus does not say, '*If you give*', or '*If you pray*', or '*If you fast*'. Using the word 'if' would imply we had a choice about it. Instead he says '*When you give ... When you pray ... When you fast*'. (Matthew 6.2,5,16) The word 'when' means you will do it, it is just a question of timing.

If you consider that Christians should give to the poor and pray, then you also have to take on board that Christians should fast!

## When the Bridegroom is Taken ...Fast

Fasting would have been a regular part of the religious duty of the Jewish people when Jesus lived on earth. We can safely assume that Jesus would have fasted regularly too. However once Jesus' earthly ministry began, we have no record of him fasting. This caused concern to some of the people who began to follow Jesus and one day they said to him 'How is that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but your are not? In response, Jesus talked to them about a wedding feast.

How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot as long as they have him with them. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast

**Matthew 2:19-20**

To make sense of the reply Jesus gave we need to understand who the different character at the wedding Jesus talked about really were. The bridegroom represents Jesus, the guests were the followers of Jesus, the time whilst the bridegroom is with the guests speaks of the time Jesus was on earth, and the time when the bridegroom is taken away speaks of the time between Jesus' ascension and His return to earth.

What time are we in at this moment? The answer is the period between Christ's ascension and awaiting his return. What does Jesus say will happen in that period? He says that His followers will fast. Could anything be clearer!

Arthur Wallis in his excellent book on fasting says it will be a fasting and praying church that hears the thrilling cry '*Behold the Bridegroom*'. Tears will be wiped away and the fast shall become the feast at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

# BIBLE VERSES ON FASTING

There are so many verses in the Bible that talk about fasting. If you want to do a study on them, have a look at these:

## New Testament

**Matthew 4.1-4; Mark 1.12-13; Luke 4.1-4** – *Christ's 40 days fast in the desert*

**Matthew 6.16-18** – *fasting in secret*

**Mark 2.18-20; Matthew 9.14-15; Luke 5.33-35** – *Jesus questioned as to why his disciples did not fast*

**Mark 9.29** – *the power of prayer and fasting (though not all translations include 'and fasting')*

**Luke 2.36-37** – *Prophetess Anna worshipped night and day, fasting and praying*

**Acts 13.1-3** – *early church leaders set Paul and Barnabas aside in context of prayer and fasting*

**Acts 14.23** – *Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the church, with prayer and fasting*

**1 Corinthians 7.4-5** – *fasting from sexual relations for husband and wife*

## Old Testament

Exodus 34.28-29; Deuteronomy 9.9; Deuteronomy 9.18; 1 Samuel 28.20; 1 Samuel 31.13; 2 Samuel 12.16-17 and 21-23; 2 Chronicles 20.2-4, Ezra 8.21-23, Ezra 10.6, Nehemiah 1.4; Psalm 35.13; Psalm 69.10-11; Psalm 109.24-25; Isaiah 58.3-9; Jeremiah 36.5-6; Daniel 9.2-3; Joel 1.14 and 2.12-15; Jonah 3.5-9

# THE COST OF FASTING

Whenever people think about fasting, they assume it means abstaining from food. Abstaining from food is one way of fasting, but fasting is much more than that. On the Day of Atonement, the people were told not only to abstain from food, but also to do other forms of self-denial, such as 'abstaining from working, washing, anointing, wearing shoes and co-habitation'.

We are told that when Daniel fasted (see Daniel 10.3 and 10), he not only abstained from choicest foods, such as meat and wine, but also from anointing himself. The Living Bible translation of Daniel 10.10 brings this out when it paraphrases the verse, 'All that time, I tasted neither wine nor meat, and of course I went without my deserts. I neither washed nor shaved nor combed my hair.'

Jesus said '*Seek first the kingdom of God and all other things will be added to you*' (Matthew 6.33). We all like the easy life and will do anything we can to avoid pain. But there is a cost involved in seeking God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. The cost involved in fasting can come in a variety of ways, and doesn't only apply to abstaining from food. It could apply to sexual relationships, television, news and newspapers, telephone and even people!

By nature we don't like hard work and every one of us is inclined to take the path of least resistance. Students do it when writing essays and 'borrow' material from the Internet and other students. We look for easy exercise programmes that won't cause us to perspire too much. And if we could find a diet pill that caused us to lose weight yet carry on eating it would be a winner!

Fasting is hard work. It is difficult. Denial of self is never easy. There are times during a fast when you feel like giving up. There will always be a struggle in fasting, for fasting is putting the body under subjection, until '*what I want is no longer the most important thing in my life*'. Jesus said '*if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me*' (Matthew 16.24).

The fact that we experience a struggle shows that there are still areas of us that are having difficulty denying themselves. The Bible describes it as a war between the flesh and the spirit. Every time we start to fast, our flesh rises up within us, indignant that it is being denied the things it pleasures in.

# CONCLUSION

One of the real dangers with fasting is believing that in some way we can persuade God to listen to our prayers more than someone else's, and therefore obtain better or quicker results than would normally be the case. That, of course, is a totally unbiblical view.

Fasting is a way of showing God that we choose to put everything else aside to concentrate on worshipping Him, and making our requests known – considering His help more important than anything we could do ourselves in our own strength, and with our own ideas.

What we do know is that when Christians have fasted and prayed in the past, in accordance with God's will, the most amazing results have followed, as God has intervened and answered those prayers.

If you require more information please contact us.

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