

## Fasting

Fasting is the voluntary deprivation of food. Fasting has in all ages, and among all nations, been practiced in times of sorrow, and affliction. The Mosaic law prescribed only one public occasion of strict fasting, once a year on the Day of Atonement. The Israelites also fasted at other times, when they had occasion to humble before God, mourning, to confess their sins, to demonstrate repentance, to gain God's protection and deprecate his displeasure. Especially in times of public calamity, they appointed extraordinary fasts. They began their fasts at sunset, and remained without eating until the same hour the next day.

Our Lord sternly rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocritical pretenses in the fasts they observed, and abstained from appointing any fast as part of his own religion. Jesus never ordered His followers to fast but also did not order them not to fast. Jesus fasted at least once, and that for 40 days. Prayer and fasting are mentioned as means for promoting faith and as good works. Our Lord intimated fasting after his death when He predicted that His followers would fast when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them. While Jesus was with us during His ministry, His presence removed the need for fasting, giving us all the joy we needed. Later, after His death, they would then fast. Jesus came to remove the need for religious observances by giving us the personal relationship with the divine.

After the Jewish custom, fasting was frequently joined with prayer that the mind unencumbered with earthly matter, might devote itself with less distraction to the contemplation of divine things. It clears the mind to receive a deeper spirit. [380, Leviticus 23:27-29, I Samuel 31:13, Nehemiah 9:1, II Chronicles 20:3, Luke 4:2, Mark 2:18-20, BD]