

Matthew 9:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

Analysis

Jesus offers a parable about cloth and garments: 'No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse' (οὐδεὶς δε επιβαλλει επιβλημα ρακους αγναφου επι υματιω παλαιω). Unshrunk cloth (αγναφος, new/unprocessed) sewn onto old garment will shrink when washed, tearing away from the weakened old fabric and creating worse damage. The illustration teaches that new covenant realities cannot be patched onto old covenant forms. Jesus isn't reforming Judaism but inaugurating something fundamentally new. Attempting to combine the two destroys both. This has profound implications: Christianity isn't Judaism 2.0 but the fulfillment that transcends and replaces the preparatory system.

Historical Context

First-century garment repair was common in subsistence economies where clothing was valuable and carefully maintained. Everyone understood the problem of mixing new and old fabric. Jesus' illustration would have been immediately comprehensible. The deeper issue addressed Jewish Christian attempts to maintain old covenant practices (circumcision, food laws, festivals) while following Jesus. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) wrestled with this question. Paul's letters insist that Gentile Christians need not adopt Jewish customs. The temple's destruction (AD 70) forced recognition that old covenant forms had ended. The

parable warned against syncretism that would destroy both Judaism's integrity and Christianity's newness.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What old covenant or religious forms do Christians sometimes try to patch onto new covenant realities?
2. How does this parable help us understand the relationship between Old and New Testaments?
3. In what ways might we be trying to put 'new wine in old wineskins' in contemporary church practice?

Interlinear Text

οὐδεὶς	δὲ	ἐπιβάλλει	ἐπίβλημα	βάκους	ἀγνάφου	ἐπὶ					
No man	G1161	putteth	G1911	a piece	G1915	cloth	G4470	of new	G46	unto	G1909
G3762											
ἱματίου	παλαιῷ·	αἴρει	γὰρ	τὸ		πλήρωμα					
garment	an old	taketh	for	G3588	that which is put in to fill it up	G4138					
G2440	G3820	G142	G1063								
αὐτοῦ	ἀπὸ	τοῦ	ἱματίου	καὶ	χεῖρον	σχίσμα	γίνεται				
G846	from	G3588	garment	and	G2532	worse	the rent	is made	G4978	G1096	
G575			G2440			G5501					

Additional Cross-References

John 16:12 (Parallel theme): I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

