

# 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

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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' (οὐδεις δε επιβαλλει επιβλημα ρακους αγναφου επι ιματιω 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

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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

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**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

## Study Questions

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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

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

## Additional Cross-References

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

