

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 11 (PART 3)

MATTHEW 11:20-24 - JESUS DENOUNCES CITIES

CHORAZIN, BETHSAIDA AND CAPERNAUM WERE ALL GALILEAN CITIES IN WHICH MOST OF JESUS' MIRACLES WERE PERFORMED. THEY SAW GREAT POWER BUT DID NOT RESPOND TO JESUS' MESSAGE. PERHAPS, CONSIDERING THE CONTEXT OF THE CULTURAL STATEMENT JUST PRECEDING THIS, EVEN THESE "GOOD JEWISH CITIES" WERE ALSO UNWILLING TO ACCEPT THE VERY THING THEY THEIR SOULS WERE LOOKING FOR BECAUSE IT DIDN'T FIT WITH THEIR EXPECTATIONS AND CORRUPTED DESIRES.

IN A STUNNING REBUKE, JESUS LISTS THREE PAGAN CITIES (TYRE, SIDON AND SODOM), EACH NOTORIOUS FOR THEIR EVIL AND SIN AS PLACES THAT WOULD HAVE REPENTED HAD HIS MIRACLES BEEN PERFORMED THERE! THE JEWISH CITIES DID NOT REPENT WHEN THEY HEARD THE GOSPEL - PERHAPS IT WASN'T THEIR EVIL THAT WAS PREVENTING THEM, BUT THEIR "GOODNESS", THEIR LACK OF RECOGNITION THAT THEY TOO NEEDED SAVING.

MATTHEW 11:25-27 -

BEAUTIFULLY PLACED AT THE END OF THIS CRITICAL COMMENTARY BY JESUS, WE HAVE THE GREAT INVITATION FROM THE CHRIST. JESUS PRAYS AND THANKS HIS FATHER FOR HE HAS OPENED THIS KINGDOM INVITATION TO. THE "WISE/INTELLIGENT" OF THIS WORLD CAN'T SEE IT, BUT THE "INFANTS" DO. IT'S OFTEN THE PEOPLE WHO THINK THEY KNOW EVERYTHING WHO MISS WHAT MATTERS.

THIS ISN'T THE WAY THE WORLD WORKS, BUT IT IS THE WAY GOD HAS CHOSEN TO DO THINGS - AND IT'S HIS PREROGATIVE TO DO IT THAT WAY! IT IS ~~ONLY~~ THROUGH JESUS CHRIST THAT MAN AND WOMEN CAN BE SAVED. GOD IS THE ONLY ONE THAT SATISFIES AND FULFILLS, NOT TO MENTION THE ONE WHO FORGIVES AND REDEEMS, AND THE ONLY WAY FOR PEOPLE TO GET TO GOD IN THIS DAY IS THROUGH HIS SON, JESUS (V. 27).

AND TO THE WEARY WORLD, JESUS SAYS "COME TO ME..."

MATTHEW 11:28-30 - JESUS' INVITATION

THE WAY OF THE WORLD AND THIS CULTURE HAS BEEN DESCRIBED, AND NOW JESUS OFFERS A NEW WAY. JESUS IS INVITING HIS AUDIENCE TO SUBMIT TO HIS TEACHING AND HIS WAY.

A YOKE IS A PIECE OF WOOD USED TO CONNECT A TEAM OF OXEN TOGETHER. THIS DEVICE ENABLED THE TWO BEASTS TO WORK TOGETHER TO PLOW OR PULL WITH THE EFFORT AND WEIGHT BEING SHARED. THEY WOULD BE UNITED IN THE TASK, AND MOVE AT THE SAME PACE TO ACCOMPLISH IT. IN JESUS' DAY THIS PHRASE WAS USED BY THE RABBIS TO ILLUSTRATE WHAT IT MEANT TO FOLLOW THEIR TEACHING AND INTERPRETATION OF GOD'S WORD AND LAW. THIS IS NOW USED BY JESUS TO CALL HIS FOLLOWERS TO CEASE FROM THEIR INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-RELIANT EFFORT AND SURRENDER TO HIM.

CONSIDER THIS IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS CHAPTER: HUMAN BEINGS ARE **WEARY** FROM SEARCHING FOR WHAT SATISFIES. THEY ARE **HEAVY-LADEN** EITHER FROM THE ENDLESS SEARCH FOR SATISFACTION OR FROM THE ENDLESS TOIL TO BE AND STAY "GOOD". AND JESUS, KNOWING THIS BETTER THAN ANY OF US, INVITES, ENTREATS, OFFERS **REST**.

THERE IS A YOKE/BURDEN ASSOCIATED WITH JESUS AND HIS TEACHING, BUT IT IS NOT HARD AND HEAVY, IT IS EASY AND LIGHT. THE "WORK" OF DISCIPLESHIP BRINGS "REST" BECAUSE OUR RABBI IS GENTLE AND HUMBLE IN HEART - WHAT A BEAUTIFUL DESCRIPTION.

IN FACT, THIS OFFER AND THESE WORDS ARE REMARKABLE FOR THEIR TIME AND FOR OURS. HERE IS A POWERFUL OBSERVATION BY DANE ORTLUND IN HIS BOOK BASED ON THESE VERSES.

"MY DAD POINTED OUT TO ME SOMETHING THAT CHARLES SPURGEON POINTED OUT TO HIM. IN THE FOUR GOSPEL ACCOUNTS GIVEN TO US IN MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, AND JOHN—EIGHTY-NINE CHAPTERS OF BIBLICAL TEXT—THERE'S ONLY ONE PLACE WHERE JESUS TELLS US ABOUT HIS OWN HEART.

WE LEARN MUCH IN THE FOUR GOSPELS ABOUT CHRIST'S TEACHING. WE READ OF HIS BIRTH, HIS MINISTRY, AND HIS DISCIPLES. WE ARE TOLD OF HIS TRAVELS AND PRAYER HABITS. WE FIND LENGTHY SPEECHES AND REPEATED OBJECTIONS BY HIS HEARERS, PROMPTING FURTHER TEACHING. WE LEARN OF THE WAY HE UNDERSTOOD HIMSELF TO FULFILL THE WHOLE OLD TESTAMENT. AND WE LEARN IN ALL FOUR ACCOUNTS OF HIS UNJUST ARREST AND SHAMEFUL DEATH AND ASTONISHING RESURRECTION. CONSIDER THE THOUSANDS OF PAGES THAT HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BY THEOLOGIAN'S OVER THE PAST TWO THOUSAND YEARS ON ALL THESE THINGS.

BUT IN ONLY ONE PLACE—PERHAPS THE MOST WONDERFUL WORDS EVER UTTERED BY HUMAN LIPS—DO WE HEAR JESUS HIMSELF OPEN UP TO US HIS VERY HEART:

COME TO ME, ALL WHO LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU, AND LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM GENTLE AND LOWLY IN HEART, AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. FOR MY YOKE IS EASY, AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT. (MATT. 11:28—30)

IN THE ONE PLACE IN THE BIBLE WHERE THE SON OF GOD PULLS BACK THE VEIL AND LETS US PEER WAY DOWN INTO THE CORE OF WHO HE IS, WE ARE NOT TOLD THAT HE IS "AUSTERE AND DEMANDING IN HEART." WE ARE NOT TOLD THAT HE IS "EXALTED AND DIGNIFIED IN HEART." WE ARE NOT EVEN TOLD THAT HE IS "JOYFUL AND GENEROUS IN HEART." LETTING JESUS SET THE TERMS, HIS SURPRISING CLAIM IS THAT HE IS "GENTLE AND LOWLY IN HEART." (DANE ORTLUND, "GENTLE AND LOWLY", PAGES 17-18)

WE LEARN SOME PRETTY IMPORTANT THINGS IN THIS SECTION. LET'S REVIEW AND CONSIDER

1 - YOU CAN BE THE GREATEST PROPHET THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN, BUT THAT IS NOTHING COMPARED TO BEING IN GOD'S KINGDOM. MAKE YOUR AIM TO LIVE FOR GOD'S COMING KINGDOM AND MINIMIZE ANY DRIVE TO BE GREAT OR KNOWN IN THIS LIFE.

2 - OUR CULTURE IS EMPTY, SEARCHING AND NEVER SATISFIED. ALWAYS LOOKING FOR THE NEW THING THAT WILL FILL THEIR HEARTS WITH PEACE OR LOVE OR SATISFACTION. THE OFFERINGS OF THIS WORLD ARE LIMITED AT BEST IN THEIR ABILITY TO FILL THE LONGINGS OF THE HUMAN SOUL. THE WORLD IS WORKING OVERTIME TO FIND SOMETHING OTHER THAN GOD TO GIVE THEM MEANING AND PURPOSE. THIS IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW, EVEN AS CHRISTIANS, SO WE DO NOT GET PULLED IN TO THE STRONG CULTURAL RIP CURRENTS ALL AROUND US.

3 - WE SHOULD NOT TRUST IN OUR GOODNESS OR THINK THAT WE DO NOT NEED SAVING. IT'S FOOLISH TO COMPARE OURSELVES TO OTHERS OR SOME ARTIFICIAL STANDARD. EVERYONE NEEDS SALVATION! AND THE ONLY WAY TO BE SAVED IS TO COME TO JESUS - NOT HEARING ABOUT HIM OR SEEING HIS MIRACULOUS POWER, BUT SURRENDERING OUR LIVES TO HIS LEADING AND LEARNING FROM HIM HOW TO LIVE THE RIGHT WAY. JESUS IS WHERE LIFE AND REST AND PEACE AND LOVE IS FOUND, *WHY LOOK ANYWHERE ELSE?*