

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 8 (PART 2)

MATTHEW 8:18-22 - SCRIBE - FOLLOW ME

THE INVITATION FROM JESUS IS "FOLLOW ME". THIS SEEMS LIKE A SOMEWHAT INCOMPLETE PHRASE FOR MOST OF US. IF SOMEONE SAID "HEY COME FOLLOW ME" WE'D PROBABLY ASK "FOLLOW YOU WHERE." BUT THIS ISN'T WHAT JESUS IS ASKING - HE'S NOT ASKING PEOPLE TO FOLLOW HIM SOMEWHERE - HE'S ASKING THEM TO FOLLOW ~~HIM~~ WHEREVER ~~HE~~ MAY GO. IT'S NOT WHERE WE ARE GOING, IT'S WHO WE'RE FOLLOWING.

THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS IN THESE TWO INSTANCES IS GREAT.

ARE YOU WILLING TO GO WHEREVER HE MIGHT LEAD, EVEN IF IT IS OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE?

ARE YOU WILLING TO PRIORITIZE FOLLOWING JESUS OVER EVERY OTHER RELATIONSHIP AND PRIORITY?

FIRST LET ME BURY MY FATHER? THERE ARE A FEW THINGS THIS COULD MEAN:

JESUS ISN'T IGNORING THE BIBLICAL COMMAND TO HONOR ONE'S FATHER AND MOTHER BUT USING THIS MOMENT TO SHINE LIGHT ON THE PRIORITY OF THE CALL OF DISCIPLESHIP AND THAT "SPIRITUAL LIFE" IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVEN ONE'S PHYSICAL LIFE.

SECONDLY, IT COULD BE A MATTER OF THE MAN WANTING TO WAIT TILL HIS FATHER DIED OR THAT HE HAD ALREADY DIED BUT THERE WERE OTHER OBLIGATIONS TO ATTEND TO WHICH WOULD TAKE A LONG TIME.

"RECENT RESEARCH SUGGESTS THAT BURIAL CUSTOMS IN THE VICINITY OF JERUSALEM FROM ABOUT 20 B.C. TO A.D. 70 INVOLVED A REINTERMENT OF THE BONES A YEAR AFTER THE INITIAL BURIAL, ONCE THE FLESH HAD ROTTED AWAY. AT THAT POINT THE SON WOULD HAVE PLACED HIS FATHER'S BONES IN A SPECIAL BOX KNOWN AS AN OSSUARY TO BE SET INTO THE WALL OF THE TOMB. THUS JESUS COULD WELL BE REBUKING THE MAN FOR WANTING TO WAIT AROUND FOR AS MUCH AS A YEAR BEFORE MAKING A COMMITMENT TO FOLLOW HIM" (NET BIBLE NOTE, MATTHEW 8:21-22)

THE CALL TO FOLLOW JESUS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT AND TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE.

MATTHEW 8:23-27 - JESUS ASLEEP IN THE BOAT

LET'S THINK FOR A MOMENT WHY JESUS IS ASLEEP ON THE BOAT. HE HAS JUST SPENT A LARGE AMOUNT OF TIME MINISTERING TO HURTING PEOPLE, DOING SPIRITUAL WARFARE ON BEHALF OF THOSE TORMENTED BY DEMONS, AND CERTAINLY EXTENDING LOVE AND COMPASSION TO THE PEOPLE HE IS MEETING WITH. THAT CAN BE A VERY EMOTIONALLY AND PHYSICALLY DRAINING EXPERIENCE WITH EVEN ONE PERSON! JESUS IS DOING THIS ALL DAY AND EVEN "WHEN EVENING CAME" (V. 16), HE'S ALSO "HEALING ALL WHO WERE ILL" (V. 16)

WE'RE DISCOVERING MORE ABOUT JESUS - HE HAS POWER OVER SICKNESS AND DEMONS AND NATURAL ELEMENTS. THIS ENTIRE CHAPTER HAS PAINTED A PICTURE OF JESUS BRINGING ORDER TO CHAOS AND PEACE (SHALOM) TO BROKENNESS.

V. 26 - LITTLE FAITH - LITTLE FAITH (GK. *OLIGOPISTOS*) IS NOT "NO FAITH" (GK. *APISTOS*), BUT "INEFFECTIVE," "DEFECTIVE," OR "DEFICIENT" FAITH. (ESV STUDY BIBLE, MT 8:26)

V. 27 - THE DISCIPLES ARE FOLLOWING JESUS, IN AWE OF HIS POWER, YET WITH PLENTY OF QUESTIONS AND UNKNOWNNS THAT REMAIN.

MATTHEW 8:28-34 - JESUS, DEMONS AND A WHOLE BUNCH OF PIGS

Q - WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS YOU OBSERVE ABOUT THIS RECORD?

Q - WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE REACTION OF THE TOWNSPEOPLE?

JESUS HAS ARRIVED IN AN AREA OF GALILEE WHICH WAS LIKELY INHABITED BY GENTILES PREDOMINANTLY (V. 28 - COUNTRY OF THE GADARENES), THUS HERDSMEN RAISING AN ANIMAL UNCLEAN TO JEWS (PIGS). THE DEMON-POSSESSED MEN WERE ALSO LIVING AMONG TOMBS, AN AREA CERTAINLY CONSIDERED UNCLEAN AS WELL. AND JESUS IS ABLE TO MAINTAIN HIS HOLINESS AND ENTER INTO AREAS FORSAKEN BY OTHERS TO BRING HEALING AND DELIVERANCE.

V. 29 - THOUGH WE DON'T HAVE MUCH BACKSTORY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, THE DEMONS ARE CERTAINLY AWARE THAT THE ARRIVAL OF THE MESSIAH (SON OF GOD) IS NOT GOOD NEWS FOR THEM. JESUS IS INTERACTING WITH THE DEMONS AS OPPOSED TO THE MEN AND THE DEMONS ARE VERY CONCERNED THAT HE IS DEALING WITH THEM (LIT: TORMENTING *THEM*, V. 29) "BEFORE THE TIME" AKA THE TIME OF JUDGMENT OF EVIL AND DEMONIC FORCES. THEY BEGIN TO NEGOTIATE, YET JESUS IS DIRECT AND AUTHORITATIVE, RESPONDING WITH "GO!" (V. 32)

"THE HERD OF PIGS WOULD HAVE BEEN RAISED FOR FOOD IN THIS GENTILE REGION ON THE EAST SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE, AND THE LOCAL PEOPLE WERE VERY UPSET (ALL THE CITY . . . BEGGED HIM TO LEAVE) AT THE LOSS OF THIS LARGE HERD (ABOUT 2,000, MARK 5:13). THE PIGS' FATE IN THE SEA PREFIGURES AND PICTURES THE FINAL FATE OF DEMONS, WHEN GOD DEFEATS SATAN AND THROWS HIM INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE (REV. 20:10)." (ESV STUDY BIBLE)

V. 34 — "CAME TO MEET JESUS" REMEMBER THAT THE MIRACLES ARE NOT THE END IN OF THEMSELVES BUT THEY ARE SIGNS POINTING TO THE END - COMING TO MEET JESUS. THIS IS TRUE TODAY AS WELL. YET, SOMETIMES ONCE PEOPLE GET THERE, THEY DON'T WANT TO STAY

REMEMBER, IT'S *WHO* WE ARE FOLLOWING THAT MATTERS, NOT JUST WHERE WE'RE GOING OR WHAT WE'RE DOING ALONG THE WAY.

BIBLE STUDY NOTES: WHAT DO WE MAKE OF THE FACT THAT MATTHEW RECORDS THERE WERE TWO PEOPLE? THERE MAY BE A REASON THAT RELATES TO JEWISH LITERATURE MOTIFS (MATTHEW INCLUDES A NUMBER OF THINGS TWICE THAT OTHER GOSPEL WRITERS ONLY INCLUDE ONCE - 2 BLIND MEN IN BOTH MATTHEW 9:27 AND 20:30) AND TRUE THINGS BEING CONFIRMED BY "THE MOUTH OF TWO". OR MAYBE HE REMEMBERED IT WITH TWO AND OTHER DISCIPLES REMEMBERED IT AS ONE - EVEN IF THAT IS THE CASE, THIS DOESN'T INVALIDATE THE GOD-INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE THE FOCUS OF THE PASSAGE IS JESUS'S AUTHORITY OVER THE DEMONS AND THE DELIVERANCE OF THOSE FORMERLY TORMENTED BY THEM. THERE MAY BE OTHER CLUES TO WHY MATTHEW HAS TWO MEN, AND IT'S WORTH FURTHER STUDY - BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO SHAKE OUR FAITH IN THE RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLE.