

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 11 (PART 2)

MATTHEW 11:7-15 - JESUS' COMMENTS ON SIGNIFICANCE OF JOHN

THOUGH WE ONLY HAVE A FEW RECORDED INSTANCES OF HIS LIFE AND MINISTRY, JOHN WAS A VERY SIGNIFICANT FIGURE IN REDEMPTIVE HISTORY. JESUS ACKNOWLEDGES THAT PEOPLE WERE NOT DRAWN TO JOHN BECAUSE OF HIS APPEARANCE OR CHARM BUT BECAUSE HE WAS A PROPHET THAT GOD WAS POWERFULLY WORKING THROUGH. AFTER THE EXCHANGE WITH JOHN'S DISCIPLES ABOUT JOHN'S DOUBTS, JESUS DECLARES TO HIS AUDIENCE HOW GREAT JOHN WAS. JOHN'S DOUBTS HAD NOT DISQUALIFIED OR DIMINISHED HIM.

JOHN WAS SERVING A SPECIFIC PROPHETIC PURPOSE PROPHESED IN MALACHI 3 & 4, THE FINAL CHAPTERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT:

MALACHI 3:1 - BEHOLD, I AM GOING TO SEND MY MESSENGER, AND HE WILL CLEAR THE WAY BEFORE ME. AND THE LORD, WHOM YOU SEEK, WILL SUDDENLY COME TO HIS TEMPLE; AND THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT, IN WHOM YOU DELIGHT, BEHOLD, HE IS COMING," SAYS THE LORD OF HOSTS.

MALACHI 4:5-6 - "BEHOLD, I AM GOING TO SEND YOU ELIJAH THE PROPHET BEFORE THE COMING OF THE GREAT AND TERRIBLE DAY OF THE LORD. 6 "HE WILL RESTORE THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS TO THEIR CHILDREN AND THE HEARTS OF THE CHILDREN TO THEIR FATHERS, SO THAT I WILL NOT COME AND SMITE THE LAND WITH A CURSE."

JOHN'S MINISTRY PURPOSE WAS TO "PREPARE" THE PEOPLE FOR THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH, PRIMARILY THROUGH THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF REPENTANCE. HE IS SERVING IN A ROLE PROPHESED BY MALACHI THAT AN "ELIJAH" LIKE FIGURE WOULD COME. WHILE SOME JEWS BELIEVED THAT ELIJAH WOULD LITERALLY COME BEFORE THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH, BUT JESUS AFFIRMS THE VIEW THAT JOHN'S ROLE WAS ~~LIKE~~ ELIJAH'S.

AND YET, JESUS USES THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EMPHASIZE THAT EVEN HOW GREAT JOHN WAS, THE "LEAST" IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS GREATER THAN JOHN. JESUS' EMPHASIS IS THAT THE GREATEST CALLING OR ROLE IS NOT TO BE GREAT IN THIS AGE, BUT TO ENTER AND LIVE IN THE AGE TO COME. THINK ABOUT THAT!

V. 12 - THERE IS OPPOSITION TO THE KINGDOM'S MOVE. JOHN IS IN PRISON BY HEROD. THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS ARE (AND WILL) SCHEME TO ARREST AND EVENTUALLY KILL JESUS.

V. 13 - SOMETHING NEW IS HAPPENING IN THE MINISTRY OF JOHN AND JESUS BUT YET IT IS CONNECTED TO THE PROPHETS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

MATTHEW 11:16-19 - JESUS' COMMENTARY ON THIS GENERATION

JESUS SAYS A FEW THINGS ABOUT THE CURRENT GENERATION. FIRST, THEY ARE LIKE CHILDREN. SECOND, THEY ARE UNSATISFIED CHILDREN LOOKING TO BE STIMULATED. THIRD, THEY ARE CALLING OUT TO OTHER UNSATISFIED CHILDREN ASKING FOR THEM TO DO THE WORK FOR THEM. WHEN THESE CHILDREN GET WHAT THEY WERE LOOKING FOR, IT DIDN'T DO THE TRICK AND NOW THEY REMAIN UNSATISFIED.

CONTEXTUALLY, JOHN AND JESUS' MINISTRIES WERE VERY DIFFERENT. JOHN WAS IN THE WILDERNESS, ISOLATED AND KIND OF ODD AND JESUS WAS AMONG THE PEOPLE, INTERACTING AND FEASTING. BOTH OF THEIR MINISTRIES WERE VERY DIFFERENT, OPPOSITE STYLES IN MANY RESPECTS, AND YET THE

GENERATION OF PEOPLE SEEING THEM FIRST HAND DON'T LIKE EITHER! THEY CRITICIZED BOTH RATHER THAN ACCEPTING THEM AND RECOGNIZING GOD'S SPIRIT FUELING BOTH.

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 11:25-28 - JESUS' INVITATION

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.

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..."

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?