

Sent: Wednesday, December 11, 2019 5:48 PM  
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Matthew 11

"Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest! Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your soul. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light!" (Matthew 11:28-30)

Where are we in our study of Matthew? As Dr. Constable writes: In the first 10 chapters, Matthew has presented the credentials of "the King" in relationship to His birth, His baptism, His temptations, His righteous teaching (the Sermon on the Mount), and His supernatural powers! Israel has heard the message of the "nearness of the Kingdom" from John the Baptist, Jesus Himself, and His disciples! Great miracles and "signs" have authenticated His Messiahship, and the call for repentance. Now Israel must choose!

So, what do we see in Matthew 11? Only indifference and mounting opposition!

Our text begins with even John the Baptist expressing "doubts"--and "wrong expectations"--of Jesus! Among other things, John--who was languishing in prison--expected to see Jesus bring immediate judgment upon the people, stand up to Rome, and be more aggressive in establishing His earthly kingdom (and perhaps free him from prison)! And so, he sent two of his disciples to ask the question: "Are you the Expected One, or should we look for another?"

Jesus told them to report back to John what they "hear and see"! "The blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel (the "good news") preached to them..." (vs. 5)! Wow! All fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah and others! What more authentication could anyone hope for! (The Scriptures don't record how John the Baptist received the news, but we can only believe that it served to take away, or certainly lessen, his doubts!)

Then, as the two disciples "were going away," Jesus reflected on the "greatness" of John the Baptist to the people--noting how he was the very "Messenger" prophesied (in Malachi 3) to be sent by God, in the "fulness of time," to "prepare the way of the Lord"! In fact, He said there was no one "born of women" who was greater than he! David Platt captures it right-on when he writes that "his ministry was the prophetic climax of all pre-Christian revelation"! He had "prepared the way of the Lord"!

And yet, surprisingly, Jesus went on to say that "the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he!" Wow! How can that be, one might ask! Platt provides the best explanation I've seen to explain it, by noting that "even the least one who comes into the kingdom after Jesus has a greater understanding of who Jesus was and what He accomplished--through His redemptive work--than anyone, including John the Baptist, who came before Him! And thus "greater" in that sense! (A reminder of the great privilege we have as believers today to be able to look back, and fully understand--through His inspired Word--and be able to share with others, the "good news" of salvation through Christ alone!)

Well, we next see Jesus--having been rejected--pronouncing "judgment" (the judgment John the Baptist likely was looking for!), ironically, on the very Galilean "cities" where most of His miracles had been performed! In fact, in another surprising statement, Jesus said that "if He had performed the same miracles in Tyre and Sidon (two Gentile cities on the Mediterranean Sea known for their godless idolatry and immorality)--or even in Sodom (and you know of the wickedness that was practiced there!), they would have "repented" and turned from their sin! And so, He said, it will be more tolerable for them in the day of judgment than for the Galilean cities! Wow! All of which suggests that the more you know about Jesus and the gospel story, the more responsibility and accountability you have to receive it, and act upon it! It also follows, therefore, as Paul Logan noted last nite, that there must be degrees of punishment in Hell, just as there will be degrees of rewards in heaven! A sobering thought!

In spite of the indifference and growing rejection from the crowds, Matthew closed chapter 11 with an open invitation (in verses 28-30) from Jesus to all those who "are weary and heavy-laden"--those, whether believers or unbelievers, who recognize their "weight of sin" and spiritual need (which applies to everyone)--to come to Him! Platt calls this a true "explanation of what Christianity is all about"! The call to come to Jesus is not a call to reform one's life and be a better person, but a call to give Him the full weight of their sin and find "rest for the soul"--even in the midst of the trials of life! MacArthur sees it as an "echo of the first beatitude" ("Blessed are the "poor in spirit"!)

And with this, we see a turn in the ministry of Jesus to focus on the upcoming cross and preparation of His disciples for more surprises on what's to come!

And so, men, as you go through the week ahead, whatever the circumstances, will you accept Jesus' invitation to come to Him to find true rest for your soul?

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