

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 23RD-24TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

JESUS & JOHN (MATTHEW 11:1-19)

After Jesus had completed His disciples' training for ministry, vs. 1 tells us that He went on to minister from city to city.

- In Matt. 4:12, we learned of John the Baptizer's arrest, and now we see him in prison hearing about the deeds of the Christ (vs. 2).
- So John sent a group of his disciples to Jesus with a very remarkable and surprising question (vs. 3).

John knew as a baby in His mother's womb that Jesus was the Christ (Lk. 1:41), John was the first to proclaim Jesus as the Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29), and he'd even heard the voice of God the Father at Jesus' baptism (Mt. 3:17).

- And now, John is wrestling with doubt as he asks, "Is Jesus the One, or should they all be expecting someone else?"
- Devout believers still wrestle with doubt.

Doubt often arises during difficult situations and seasons- John is in prison.

- Doubt often comes because of unmet expectations- maybe John expected Messiah to immediately inaugurate the Kingdom.
- Doubt often comes because of our own limited perspective- it's hard to remember that God's still good, in control, and at work when we can't see it.

In the midst of his doubts, John goes to Jesus with his doubts.

- When we go to Jesus with our doubts, they become stepping stones to unshakable faith.
- Rather than giving John a direct answer, Jesus challenged John disciples with evidences
- Vs. 4-6 are references to Isaiah 29, 35, & 61 that prophesied of the work of the Messiah.

After Jesus recounts His works as evidence to His identity, He closes by saying, "blessed is the one who is not offended by me".

- To not be offended by Jesus is essentially to trust Him and receive Him at His Word.
- It's allowing Him to be God and King, and to release our preconceived ideas
- This gets to the heart of genuine, saving faith.

After answering John, Jesus praised Him as a man of conviction & courage, not as a "soft preacher" who vacillated with every change and whim of culture like a "reed in the wind" (vs. 7).

- He wasn't just a "good preacher", Jesus actually identified Him as the prophet Mal. 3:1 predicted would prepare the way of Lord (vs. 10).
- According to Jesus, among those born of women, no-one was greater than John.

But amazingly, Jesus says those who are willing to become "the least of the kingdom of heaven" – poor of spirit and yielded completely to God and His will- can be greater than John!

- This advancing Kingdom of Heaven would be forcibly opposed by people, even as all of the OT and John spoke of its coming (vs. 12-13).
- This Kingdom was for those who were willing to accept how it would come (vs. 14-15).

The problem was that many didn't want to accept the Kingdom on God's terms, they wanted it on their terms.

- Jesus said that they were like childish, stubborn, hard to please children who found reasons to criticize and reject John (vs. 18) & Jesus (vs. 19).
- But "wisdom is justified by her deeds"- anyone who observed Jesus & John's behavior with a wise, honest heart would clearly see the work of God.

UNREPENTANT CITIES (MATTHEW 11:20-24)

Jesus pronounced strong judgment (woe) upon certain cities of Israel because even in spite of the "mighty works" that had been done in them, they still didn't repent and receive Him as Messiah (vs. 20).

- 3 cities in particular, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were called out because Jesus' headquarters were in Capernaum, which was only a few miles from the other 2 cities.

Jesus even says that if the ignorant residents of Gentile cities, Tyre & Sidon, had seen what these Jewish communities had seen, they would've repented in sackcloth and ashes!

- Even Sodom (vs. 23)- one of the most wicked cities in all of the Bible- would've repented and been spared judgment had they seen these mighty works.
- But these people didn't repent or receive Jesus.

There is a false idea that some skeptics hold onto that if we could just see "a miraculous sign from God"- then we'd believe.

- But the skepticism of human nature is not so easily satisfied.
- The God of all creation became a human, walked in the midst of these people, healed the blind, deaf, sick, and raised the dead- and yet that wasn't enough for them to believe.

Not every obstacle to belief in God through Christ has to do with not having enough tangible evidence or information to have faith.

- Sometimes, there are volitional obstacles- in other words, some of us simply don't want it to be true because if it is, that means we can't be charge.
- If Jesus is God, Messiah, and King, then that means that our lifestyles must change to be in conformity to His Word and commands.

These cities had 2 things going on for them that were evidences showing Himself to them.

- The first is their Jewish heritage, feasts, traditions, customs, prophets and law- it all pointed to the Messiah and the Kingdom.
- The second is that they received clear, undeniable signs that God was in their midst through the miracles of Jesus and His apostles.

Jesus tells them that because they'd received so much evidence from God and yet they still refused to repent and surrender to Christ, it would be "tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you" (vs. 24).

- There are degrees of punishment in the ultimate judgment to come.
- Those to whom God has revealed Himself most clearly and yet still have refuse to repent and believe will be punished more severely.

I WILL GIVE YOU REST (MATTHEW 11:25-30)

After Jesus expresses His righteous anger towards those who refused to believe in spite of all the evidence presented, He prays a prayer of gratitude towards the Father for those who had believed and received His Kingdom (vs. 25-27).

- The mysteries of the Kingdom are "hidden" who see themselves as wise and understanding, and are revealed to those who are like "little children" (vs. 25).

The Father has committed all things to Jesus the Son, and Jesus uniquely knows the Father and can reveal Him to whomever He chooses (vs. 27).

- Revealing God the Father was part of the purpose of Jesus' coming- He didn't come just to bring a word from God; He came as the Word of God made flesh (John 1:14).
- To see Jesus and to know Him is to know God!

Jesus then extends the greatest invitation in the history of humanity that gives us an explanation of Christianity that separates it from every other religious system

- "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (vs. 28).
- Every human being carries with them a weight and a burden- a burning desire on the inside to find rest, purpose, and meaning in life.

On our own, we carry the weight of our sin and our feeble attempts to make ourselves "good".

- We carry the weight of trying to create lives of meaning and purpose.
- We carry the weight of attempting to attain a certain level of peace and certainty about ourselves, our lifestyles, and beliefs- even in the midst of our self-condemning doubts.
- This weight is exhausting.

Jesus invites us to bring it all to Him.

- He'll take the weight of our sin upon Himself, give our lives new meaning & purpose, and teach us what it is we need to find peace and rest as we "learn from Him" (vs. 29) and take on His yoke.
- "Yoke" is an agricultural term- it was a heavy wooden bar that fit over the neck of an ox so that it could pull a cart or plow.
- In a shared yoke, the stronger ox would help the weaker.

What Jesus is saying is that when we come to Him in our weakness and weariness, He gives us His complete ability to obey God and live a life of purpose through His strength, not our own.

- This is the only way to truly find rest for our souls (vs. 29)- to know that it's about Him and His work, strength, and power.
- This shared yoke that Jesus offers to us is "easy" and His burden is "light" (vs. 30).

This is what makes Christianity so different from every other religion- it's an invitation to admit our weakness and to have faith in His work, not confidence in our own.

- It's not a philosophy that teaches us how to be good, strong, or virtuous.
- It's an invitation to relationship through admitting we can never be those things on our own and that we need Christ.

It's difficult to accept the New Wine of the Kingdom at face value.

CHOKING ON THE NEW WINE

In the midst of our weariness and doubt, God invites us to "come" and promises to give us rest.

- "How many more signs will it take for you to believe that I'm all I say that I am and that I'm with you?"
- "Will you choose to bring to me your burden, or will you keep trying to shoulder it on your own?"