

CHRIST, OUR TEACHER

Matthew 11:20-30

Intro: This is a passage which gives us an emphasis upon the sovereignty of God on the one hand, and the responsibility of man on the other hand. It also shows that conditions in the hearts of men have an effect upon God's dealings with them. Matthew got into subject here which have delighted the hearts of His people and, at the same time, baffled their understanding. But here it all is in Matthew's Gospel.

Notice first of all:

I. HOW THE LORD UPBRAIDED THREE CITIES (Matt. 11:20-24).

This means that He began to reprove them because of the way that they had responded to His ministry. Their condemnation was just because it was in these three cities, all located at the northern end of the Sea of Galilee that our Lord had done "most of his mighty works," according to verse 20. And yet the people had not repented.

We have a suggestion in verse 25 as to why the people had not repented. The Lord Jesus was speaking to the Father, and said that He was thankful that the message Christ came to give was hidden from the wise and the prudent. And it is always hidden from "the wise and the prudent."

The way the Lord was using this expression, speaking of a wise person, seems to indicate a person who feels that he knows more than the one who is trying to teach him. In fact, such a wise person feels that he should be teaching and the other person should listen to him.

A prudent person is one who at least thinks that he has everything figured out. He knows the main purpose of life. He has some idea of what is coming afterwards—at least he thinks that he does. And so he is not the kind of a person who is even close to listening to an unlettered carpenter from Nazareth. All of the evidence of the Lord's "mighty works" can be done right before his eyes, but his heart is not open to them.

Actually you can see that their problem was not their wisdom, but their pride. They may have had some knowledge that was right, but they had not put it all together or they would have listened gladly to our Lord.

Alfred Plummer, in his commentary on Matthew, says this:

The sin of these flourishing places was not violence or sensuality, but indifference. There is no evidence that

sensuality, but indifference. There is no evidence that they opposed or ridiculed Christ; but His work made no impression upon them. They perhaps took a languid interest in His miracles and teaching; but His beneficence never touched their hearts, and His doctrine produced no change in their lives. Self-satisfied complacency, whether in the form of Pharisaic self-righteousness or in that of popular indifference, is condemned by Christ more severely than grosser sins. A life that externally is eminently respectable may be more fatally antichristian than one that is manifestly scandalous (p. 165).

In rebuking Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, our Lord also mentioned three other cities: Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom.

Tyre and Sidon represent one of the most glorious civilizations of the past. We learn about them from Isaiah 23, Jeremiah 25 and 27, as well as from Amos 1:9, 10 and Zech. 9:2, 3. They are located along the northern coast of Palestine. They had immense wealth. They had what they felt was complete security. Everything that wealth and trade and security could give them, they had. But they had no place for the Gospel.

We all know about Sodom and its sister city, Gomorrah. Although there was sin in Tyre and Sidon, yet not the gross kind of immorality which has since carried the name of Sodom with it.

And yet the Lord said that if He had done in Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, what He did in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, then Tyre and Sidon would have repented in dust and ashes and would have remained until the Lord's day, and Sodom would never have been destroyed.

Illus: One of our ladies asked me a question which one of her children had asked her recently, and it amounted to this: Why can a notorious criminal be saved just before he is executed for his crimes when many "good" people go to hell even in spite of all the good that they do. This text gives us the answer.

This denunciation was followed by:

II. OUR LORD'S PRAYER (Matt. 11:25, 26).

The people who have trouble with the sovereignty of God in salvation, need to pay close attention to these words of our Lord--His words in prayer to His Father.

He was not saying that the Lord had hidden the truth of the

Gospel from them because of what they were. If that were the case, then no one would ever be saved. But He was saying that the attitude of the people in those three cities justified what the Father had done--and the Lord was in perfect agreement with the Father.

Obviously this passage was meant to be a warning to the people who are proud of their riches, or proud of their wisdom, or proud of their situation and background. But it also means that the grossly immoral need to be warned also. The Lord was dealing with two groups of people who were widely different in their circumstances, but the Lord had brought judgment upon them both.

Having prayed (and we can assume that this was like all of our Lord's prayers, a private prayer), the Lord proceeded with:

III. HIS MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE BEFORE HIM (Matt. 11:27-30).

First He said, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." This had practically the same meaning as our Lord's words in Matt. 28:18 where it is recorded that He said, "All power (authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

This is true of things in general, but it is also true of salvation, of the preaching of the Gospel. The salvation of sinners is not determined by sinners. All of them without exception would condemn themselves eternally by their rejection of the truth. Only when the Lord reveals the truth to them, will they repent and believe in Him.

But notice how it is expressed here in connection with the knowledge of the Father and the Son. The Lord indicates that Tyre and Sidon were the way they were because they did not know God nor the One He had appointed for the salvation of sinners. And the same was true of the sinful people of Sodom.

Our Lord was speaking of this very truth when in John 16:1-3 He spoke these words:

These things have I spoken unto you,
that ye should not be offended.
They shall put you out of the synagogues:
yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you
will think that he doeth God service.
And these things will they do unto you,
because they have not known the Father, nor me.

How do men come to the knowledge of the Father and of the Son. Our Lord said that it is in His hands, and that it must

come as a revelation from Him. The one who has seen the Son has seen the Father. So to know the Father is to know the Son, and vice versa.

Now the Lord was not speaking of some revelation like the Scriptures, in addition to what has already been written, i.e., some special revelation. He was not speaking of some kind of a feeling that we might get within ourselves. He was not talking about some vision. The Father is revealed by Christ through the Word, and it is when people really learn about God that you no longer have to argue with them about their sin nor about their need of salvation.

If the whole world knew what the Lord expressed here in verse 27, we would not have the time to deal with the people who would want to be saved. But not everyone knows this. In fact, very few know it. And this is the reason that we need to recognize how dependent we are upon the Lord, and now upon the Holy Spirit, to make God known to people through the ministry of the Word.

And then the Lord issued a wonderful invitation. This is the part of the chapter that many of us have known since we were children, but we have just taken these three verses by themselves. How much more meaningful they are when we see them in their setting in the Gospel of Matthew!

What did the Lord say? (Re-read verses 28-30.)

The Lord said, "Come unto me." And then He said literally, "Learn from me." However, in our Lord's day this is exactly what the people did not want to do. They came to the Lord to have their family members and friends healed, but they did not come to Him to learn what He had to tell them. Consequently, they had no rest. They were burdened and heavy laden, but they had not rest. Only Christ can give them that rest, and He does it by showing us Who He is.

It is amazing how many people will search for the truth, will try to unfold the mysteries of life, without ever coming to the Lord Jesus Christ. Our schools of higher learning are full of such people. Our leaders in government are faced every day with the complex problems of life, problems for which no man has the answer (and many are saying so). But they will not come to Christ!

"Take my yoke upon you" probably means, among other things, that the people who come must not come critically, with the attitude that if it appeals to me, I will take it. But they must come in submission to the Lord. They must be ready to accept what He has to say before they know what it is. And

though they have lived long, and sinned much, they will find that the Lord Jesus, instead of being severe and condemnatory, is "meek and lowly in heart," and it is with Him and through Him that they will "find rest unto their souls."

People are fearful of coming to Christ because they feel that He will take all of the pleasure they have out of their lives. The truth is, there is no peace, there is no rest, except in coming to know the Lord in His saving grace.

Concl: These last three verses give us the free offer of the Gospel. It is addressed to the people of today's Chorazins and Bethsaidas and Capernaums, today's Tyres and Sidons and Sodoms. It is addressed to all. Our responsibility is to come and to learn what the Lord has to teach us through His Word. We must come knowing that we are destitute of finding the help we need in any other place. Only Christ has the answer. And as He shows us the Father, we see our need. In His light we see light. And then coming to know Him through faith in Christ our Savior, we enter upon a life-long enjoyment of knowing our Lord and our heavenly Father better and better.