

Through the Corn

Matthew 11:7 – 12:2

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~ In our last report from our Spiritual Safari, Jesus instructed the apostles to go out to the lost house of the nation Israel; but He also commanded them to stay away from the Gentiles. Well, the children of Israel had hated the prophets; and they didn't like the apostles any better. You may remember we also wrote over this chapter: REJECTION! The apostles had the dynamic in Jesus to complete their ethic – but Israel still rejected them wholesale. Israel was extremely divided as a nation at this time; and is to this day. Jesus had said that He came to bring division – not peace! Well, division it is. We ended the last leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God with John the Baptist being a little discouraged in prison - and John was asking, "...is it He or do we look for another?"

Notice that Jesus didn't rebuke John for his doubt when He sent the apostles back to tell John what they had seen Jesus do. The apostles could testify of the credentials of the Lord Jesus because they had personally witnessed all manner of miracles. Jesus established His authority in His earthly ministry as He will establish His Kingdom on earth someday in the future. Isaiah saith, "...then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." Except the waters didn't break out at this time; and the desert was still as dry as dust. Why? – Because He didn't establish His Kingdom at that time! Make a note, friends ~

XI

7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

~ John wasn't a reed shaken in the wind. John was the wind shaking the reeds! Our modern-day pulpit is weak and cannot speak out today. They avoid large sections of Scripture altogether because they can't theologize it away; and addressing it would mean alienating a certain crowd altogether – mostly the rich man. Any teacher is subject to a real danger of some individual who doesn't like the teacher and will make false accusations that the message is being tailored to suit a certain group. This is poison in a church; and it has been found along our safari path a few times so far. Our same safari message goes out irrespective of who gets shaken in the wind by the Spirit of God; because the Spiritual Safari teaches the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ according to the sound doctrine of the apostles found only in the Word of God. John was not shaken by anything....

8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

~ John was a rugged, outdoor man. He is certainly greater than any of the Old Testament prophets in that he had direct physical and literal access to the One of Whom he prophesied. Naturally, that gave John an entirely new and different perspective on his own thinking. The reality of glory that the tabernacle ritual had pointed to was now manifesting amongst the nation Israel. Verse ten makes it clear that the Lord had come to fulfill the prophecy of Malachi chapter three at verse one - that John the Baptist is this messenger....

10 For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

~ Most people have probably heard the debate concerning whether Moses or Abraham was greater. Some like to put David in the running, too, but the Lord Jesus makes it clear there were none greater than John the Baptist. As much as we hear the Lord Jesus mention Moses and Abraham and David it's surprising to hear Him say that John is the greatest. All we know about John is that he lived and preached in the wilderness, was thrown in prison and summarily executed and – the end. That's all we have concerning the greatest prophet in the Bible. Who do you think will be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, my beloved? ~

12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

~ Here we have an extremely difficult verse to interpret. It can assume two completely different applications as the "force" can be either internal or external. The forces of evil from without seek to destroy. However, only those who are committed wholeheartedly press into it. There are also the "make-believers" – as I call them – who abound in droves on this forum on which I teach – who desperately want in because they have a great need. I feel that is what we're talking about here. In all honesty, because I always am honest with you dear readers, I am not quite clear what the Lord was saying in verse twelve and that is why I am failing at my attempt to communicate my understanding to you. All I can do is recommend that you ask the Holy Spirit to whisper revelation to you – because this is very important – but we must move along....

13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

15 He that hath ears to hear let him hear.

~ Okay, we have something to hear here so I trust you will read this very carefully, please. Allow the Spirit of God to make His message clear and concise in your heart and mind. John the Baptist fulfills the prophecy of the messenger to come, and John is that messenger. Here, they are promised that "IF" they would receive that message and accept Christ then Elijah would come. Somebody may realize that would mean that Jesus would establish the Kingdom immediately and John the Baptist would have been Elijah. That's exactly correct!

Alright, how can that be? – My answer is an emphatic and dogmatic: I do not know - again. I'm sorry. What I do know is that's what Jesus said - and Jesus can do things and say things that I simply can't explain or expound on. I'm just told to trust Him. So, that's what I do. It's worked out tremendously well so far. Someone says His offer was not a sincere offer of the Kingdom if He came with the intentions of dying on the cross. Well, this passage says "if" they accepted Him – interestingly, they didn't. They rejected Him. See, "iffy" questions are never productive or useful. "IF" Adam and Eve had not have sinned – what then? We don't know – they did! Let's make a concerted effort to form our calculations based on what we do know and stay away from iffy questions and stay away from being drawn into answering iffy questions, too. We have enough problems without making up more hypothetical problems. Moreover, doing so is an utter waste of time....

16 But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

17 And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

~ This brings us to a parable that isn't thrown around in casual Bible teaching much – because it is loaded with biting sarcasm. Not sarcastic to hurt an individual; but with a bent that illustrates a tremendous truth - one that is positively neglected in our contemporary churches – because it convicts every single one of us. One child is saying, "...let's play funeral." So, they did that but they didn't like that game because it was too depressing. So, another said, "...let's play wedding." Well, they didn't like that game, either; because it was too happy and upbeat. See, spoiled children are never satisfied. They are in a constant state of emotional flux. They go from one extreme to the other in an instant. The generation at the time in which we are studying were just like that. Do you know anyone to whom this applies today? John the Baptist was very severe and extremely austere....

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

~ The religious rulers were saying that John the Baptist was too harsh and blunt, but Jesus is too soft and sweet. There are some people playing church today that you simply cannot please. I learned this a long time ago: that we're better off forgetting about them. Nothing is going to please them, and you aren't going to make them happy. Candidly, you can't help them. They are going to make you miserable, or you just aren't going to be accepted as their friend. They typically don't like me because I'm too dry. All of my writing is just so much monotone noise to them. They say it's too deep to understand and that they don't understand me. Then, here comes the next comment pounding the pulpit making it simple to them – and they don't like that, either. Many people you encounter in your life will never be pleased with what you do, irrespective of what that is! ~

20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

~ Here, we come to a profound change. Upbraiding the cities is something totally new to Scripture in the Gospel of Matthew. The Lord Jesus has provided us His credentials and has demonstrated the dynamic that furnishes the Christian ethic, He has preached the Gospel saying the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, but has never yet said anything about "upbraiding" cities. Well, they repented not so, by de facto, they rejected Him! Christ is the King, friends. Your decision for willful unbelief causes Him to make a decision; and when Christ makes His decision to reject you, that's a frightful picture. Jesus always has the last word, my beloved....

21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

~ Chorazin and Bethsaida were both near Jesus headquarters in Capernaum. Light in our lives creates a responsibility. Jesus never set up shop in Tyre or Sidon. He made His home along the Sea of Galilee. There are degrees of punishment in hell as there will be degrees of rewards in Heaven. Many people have had a wonderful opportunity to work for Him but they have totally turned their back on the cause of Christ. I honestly don't know what happens to that islander who bows down to a Pacific idol and has never heard about the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Your guess is as good as mine, I

guess. I do know that I would rather be that native islander than to be the man that sits in the front row of a self-proclaimed Bible believing church very Sunday while rejecting Christ in their lives and actions. They will have a much worse torment than the islander in hell, I'm sure. I want to be very clear about this because it is the one area that makes me greatly disturbed and uneasy....

23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

~ Capernaum had Christ and they asked Him to leave. Remember, if Sodom had turned to Him He would not have destroyed it. God gave them every opportunity to repent. This is some very strong language that I hope makes someone sit upright and take note today. Sodom and Gomorrah were awful places. It will be better for them than for those who have heard the message of the Lord Jesus and still turn away. Moving forward, we take a quick trip back to Genesis fourteen; the wise men miss it but the babes gather every letter. When we bake spiritual cookies, let's always put them on the bottom shelf so the children can get them....

25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

~ "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me," saith the Lord. Except the nation Israel rejected Him as the Messiah – the True and Living God. His own cities have all turned their backs on Him and have asked Him to leave; and Jerusalem didn't want Him to begin with. So, that brings us to another break in His earthly ministry message - and His tone changes dramatically. Jesus is now turning to the individual need as He begins to prepare for the cross. His message changes from "repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," to....

28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

~ The "heavy laden burden" is the burden of sin. Isaiah said in his first chapter at verse four they "...were a sinful nation laden with iniquities and the seed of

evil doers; children that are corrupted have forsaken the Lord and have provoked the Holy God of Israel to anger as they have gone away backwards.” The Psalmist said in Psalm thirty-eight verse four, “....for mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. I am troubled....”

Your sins are too heavy for you to carry into eternity, my friend. The only place you will ever find rest from your burdens on this earth is at the foot of the cross of Christ. Jesus invites you to Him today; He already paid the price and bore the penalties. Take your burden of sin to Him in confession in prayer. Jesus says He is just and righteous to forgive you when you confess your sins. Take His yoke and get together with Him; learn something about the Lord Jesus Christ today – take the time in His Word – time for Him!

See, there is a rest – an awesome, amazing – rest we receive when we come to Him. There are many things we no longer have to worry about when we are committed to Christ. Jesus came meek and lowly; not trying to chair every board of religion in town. We don't have to worry about ANYTHING when we rest in Him. So many people are so busy trying to advance in the office of their denomination. It goes outside the church, too, of course. Ambitious men stepping on the fingers of others as they desperately cling to the ladder of life does not appeal to me, friends. They all want to do something or be the president of some club or organization. Let's try getting committed to the Lord! When we are in step with the movement of the Lord, we don't worry about position or office. We aren't chasing our tails because He has us running the fields He wants us to play in....

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

....Jesus is talking about the work He has appointed for you to do for Him in verse thirty. "....Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them every one to his service and to his burden...." Numbers chapter four verse seventeen. "....the service of the families of the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens...." Numbers chapter four verse twenty four. "....Moses said unto the LORD, "Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?" - Numbers chapter eleven verse eleven. There are many other aspects of this, too; but I am sure this is mainly what Jesus is talking about here because Matthew chapter eleven verses twenty-eight through thirty is where He gave a new message - not of the Kingdom - but of personal service and discipleship in the here and now....

XII

1 At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day.

~ Our Spiritual Safari is following a very definite movement now as the disciples are sent out. Rejection was what they were met with and that rejection turns to open conflict and challenge here in chapter twelve. The issue of the Sabbath is where the break between the Pharisees and Jesus occurred. The disciples are pulling ears of corn - likely oats or barley, but – they're hungry so they are eating. Well, pulling an ear off of corn was considered harvesting. Harvesting on the Sabbath day was forbidden under the Mosaic System of Levitical Law, of course.

See, these men are hungry because they are following Christ. The son of man has nowhere to lay His head and I think they had difficulty eating sometimes, too. I think the offerings from the healed kept them in perpetual poverty. The Lord Jesus is going to defend His own and that will mean the break from the Pharisees as they change from wanting to question Him to wanting to Kill Him. Jesus defends His own with a little story about King David; remember, Jesus is in the line of King David. Jesus is going to assert His Kingship in our next report. In this report we end out here in the field with the question of the Sabbath; but it comes up again and again and again. Outside and inside shall we see the Sabbath on our Spiritual Safari ~

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