

Mat 11:1,20,28 EVANGELISM & ACCOUNTABILITY

PRELIMS. I am really surprised at what I read here. Jesus is actually **teaching** about **evangelism** and **accountability!**

<1> I would love to know all the things Jesus said to His disciples here! He was “*instructing His twelve disciples*”[1], how to **evangelise!**. I would love to know the beginning the middle and the end of **everything** He said. We only have **some** of the things Jesus said. Obviously the Holy Spirit has ensured we have all the **important** things have been recorded.

<2> We are told that Jesus “*went on from there to teach and preach in their cities*”[1]! We as a denomination put a lot of emphasis on the Word on **teaching/preaching** and here we have a record that Jesus taught and preached. I feel **reassured** and **encouraged** in reading this to **continue** teaching!

<3> John Baptist’s ministry was like ours with **emphasis** on teaching **doctrine** and **discipline!** That is **why** when he was in prison (very likely **depressed** – cloisterphobia - no wind driving in his face as in wilderness!), he asked the **amazing question** ‘Are You the One..?’[3b] The reason he asked it was because what he was hearing was mainly what Jesus was **doing!** John expected to hear about Jesus’ preaching, but it was what Jesus was “**doing**” - **not preaching!** “*when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent...*”[3a]

It also seems that **Jesus Himself expected** a better **response** to His ministry than He got in those cities of Galilee because He “**denounced**” them – but look **why?** “*Then He began to denounce the cities where most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent*”[20]!! Jesus expected them to **respond** on the basis that they had witnessed His mighty works! It does **not** say He ‘denounced these cities where most His **greatest sermons were preached**’! He goes on to say that

Tyre, Sidon, (where at that time He had **never been**) **would** have **repented** if these **mighty works** (not sermons) had been performed there! Amazing!

APP It shows us that **God ‘confronts’** us in more ways than just Scripture and preaching – and that He expects a response to what we witness of Him! It seems we are **accountable** to Him for what we witness in life. Not just in **hearing** Truths with the ear but what we see around us! We **‘meet with God’** in very many more ways than in Church or reading the Word of God! We **meet** with God daily in any **‘unusual’ circumstance**, in anything that only a **Superhuman** Being can perform. When we meet with a situation that we humans want to change, we are meeting with God in His works! Any situation in which we need divine help. I believe when people say ‘O God’, they mean just that (without realising). In effect they say ‘Here’s a problem I want removed and only God can help me in it!’

<4> But this passage also shows that even apart from situations that require supernatural help, God is revealing Himself in **Creation** and His daily running of the affairs of this life! And God **challenges** us in that and looks for our **reaction!** Creation itself **provokes** us to give an answer, a **response** to God’s work in Creation. **I think the Lord is teaching us here about **responding to God’s Self-revelation!** To me, that is the whole point of [vv16-19]! *“To what can I compare this generation?”* Well, to children demanding attention and **looking** for a **response** *“We played the flute for you”* and **expected** you to respond and **dance**, *“but you did not dance”!* You did **not** do the **natural** thing! *“We sang a funeral dirge, “and you did not mourn”!* I believe [vv16,17] is teaching that the generation of Jesus did not respond appropriately to Him to the **‘natural things of life’!** **God is **immanent!** He pervades everything, the whole universe. He is involved in everything there is! He created everything there is. *“heaven of heavens cannot contain*

Thee”[1Kin8:27] “Can any **hide** himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Do I not **fill** heaven and earth?”[Jer 23:24]

And [vv18,19] teach that X’s generation **deliberately rejected** Him by using **double-standards!** John Baptist came as an **ascetic!** Very **disciplined** “*neither eating nor drinking*” and what? “*they say he has a demon*”! Jesus came “*eating and drinking*” **with all classes** of the poor and oppressed and what? “*a glutton and a drunkard a friend of tax collectors and sinners*” You **can’t win!** This chapter teach **our accountability** to God in His **Self-revelation** in Creation and life in general!!

<5> So, God manifests Himself to us in many ways apart from Scripture. Paul on **Damascus Road** was unexpectedly ‘confronted’ with Jesus Christ! God the Holy Spirit manifested Himself in revealing to Paul on many subsequent occasions. When he “*tried to enter Bythinia...the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to*”. That ‘revelation’ demanded a **response!** “*So they passed by Mysia*”[Acts16:7]. Paul responded appropriately! **Balaam’s ass** demanded a response! God meets with us in many different things and ways.

<6> Francis Shaeffer commenting on Romans 2, says the very **fact** that we **make judgments on morals and life in general** is **proof** that we ‘know God’ and respond to Him in some measure and that we will ultimately be judged by God! “*Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things... Do you suppose, O man - you who judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself - that you will escape the judgment of God?* [Rom 2:1-6]. **Accountability** to God.

Every man has ‘something’ of God and Jesus **in Him!** John spoke of Jesus as “*the True Light which lightens everyone*” [John 1:9]! Every man has some consciousness of God in him –

but sadly, man usually tries to find some **other explanation** for it! But God **holds us accountable** for His Self-revelation.

<7> I think our passage suggests, that **we can come to faith** in God, (to **salvation, to repentance**) by **responding appropriately to God's Self-revelation** in creation – or some **marvellous event!** Look at our chapter about the Galileans! Christ's condemnation on them was "*because they did **not repent***" [20c] He obviously **expected** them to repent! Tyre/Sidon would "*have **repented** long ago*" if they had the same revelation that the Jews had! *Similarly, the text "*do you **presume** on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is **meant** to lead you to repentance?*" [Rom 2:4] God's kindness can be a means of someone believing savingly on Christ! When things go well with us we are meant to ask 'Who's behind all this?' 'Why is life so good to me?' Meant to **create confidence** in God's love!

<8> This has **tremendous implications for our evangelism!** It does **not** take a lot of theological teaching and indoctrination to enlighten someone about Christ – it is a **simple faith!** It means, that a lot more people in **our vicinity** are nearer the kingdom than we think – and we ought to **capitalise** on that!

It means, that God is **not far** from **anyone** in our **neighbourhood!** To **whom** was it said 'The Lord "*is not far from each one of us*"? The **Athenians!** And "*every nation of men*"! [Acts 17:27]. **God is not far away now** – now that **Jesus has died!** It was to someone who had the **audacity** to **tempt** Jesus (a smart Alex) [Mat 22:35 with Mar 12:28] that Jesus said – after some little discussion about religion, "*you are not far from the kingdom of God*" [Mark 12:34]! How **encouraging!** That is why the Holy Spirit **ended** this passage with **His invitation** "*to the crowd*" [7] "*Come unto Me...*" 'Yes, all you who are struggling with life...you are **welcome** to come to Me'!