

Jesus Invited People to Take His Yoke

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children have their lives transformed so that they are equipped to speak boldly for Christ. In this topic, we will see that Jesus warned those who were rejecting and invited others to take His yoke and learn from Him.

Jesus had spent much time in certain cities where He had done many of His miracles. Matthew 11:20-24 says, “Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: ‘Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, 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. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.’” Here, we see that Jesus gave a warning to three cities.

The first two cities were Chorazin and Bethsaida and the third was Capernaum. Both Chorazin and Bethsaida were smaller towns located close to the city of Capernaum. Matthew 4:13 says, “And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali.” Here, we see that Jesus made Capernaum the headquarters for His ministry, so many of the miracles that Jesus did were in Capernaum and the nearby towns which included Chorazin and Bethsaida. Bethsaida was the hometown of at least five of the disciples of Jesus as John 1:43-44 says, “The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.” Then, Luke 5:8-10 tells us that James and John were partners with Simon Peter.

First, Jesus compared Chorazin and Bethsaida to Tyre and Sidon and the judgment which had come on those two cities. God promised judgment to Tyre in Ezekiel 26:4 where we read, ““And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock.”” Here, we see that God said the walls and towers of Tyre would be broken down. Later, the walls and towers were torn down and the material in those walls and towers was dumped into the Mediterranean Sea so that all that was left of Tyre was the large rock on which the city had been built. Then, Ezekiel 28:22 says, ““...Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Behold, I *am* against you, O Sidon; I will be glorified in your midst; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I execute judgments in her and am hallowed in her.’”” The judgments of these two cities happened exactly as Ezekiel had prophesied. God said that if the miracles that were done in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon that those cities would have repented long ago. As a result, the eternal judgment of Chorazin and Bethsaida will be worse than the judgment of Tyre and Sidon.

Jesus then spoke about the city of Capernaum. Jesus did many miracles in this city since this was

the city where He had made His headquarters. We see that Jesus compared Capernaum to Sodom. Jesus said that if He had done the miracles in Sodom that He had done in Capernaum, the people of Sodom would have repented and remained until that very day. Capernaum had not been evil like Sodom. Instead, they had just ignored Jesus and failed to believe in Him. Jesus had exalted Capernaum by doing so many miracles there. At the final judgment, they will be judged more severely than Sodom because of their rejection. Luke 12:48 says, “‘But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.’” Capernaum had received much and faced greater judgment.

Jesus went on to thank the Father for what He had done. Matthew 11:25-27 says, “At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*.’” Here, we see that the Father works in a very different way than the world. The world focuses on those who are highly successful based on worldly wisdom. In contrast, Jesus said that the Father revealed His truth to those who were just babes.

The word translated “babes” is used in both a good way and a negative way in the New Testament. Here, it is used in a good way. Jesus also used this word in a good way when He said in Matthew 21:15-16, “But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’ they were indignant and said to Him, ‘Do You hear what these are saying?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Yes. Have you never read, “Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise?”’” The young children were giving praise to Jesus and recognizing Him as the Son of David and the religious leaders were upset. They were upset because the title Son of David was a title for the Messiah and they refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah. The Father led children to speak for Jesus instead.

Jesus then spoke of His relationship with the Father. Jesus said that His Father chose to do what seemed good in His sight. By this statement, Jesus made it clear that He is the Son of God. Jesus said all things had been committed to Him by the Father. Matthew 28:18 says, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” Jesus went on to say that no one knows the Son but the Father. In the same way, no one fully knows the Father except the Son. The word translated “know” in these verses means *to know thoroughly or accurately so that there is full understanding*.

Jesus then said that it is possible for people to get to know the Father when the Son chooses to reveal Him. Jesus went on to invite the burdened to come to Him. Matthew 11:28-30 says, “‘Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.’” Here, we see that Jesus gave a wonderful invitation to all who would come to Him. Jesus will reveal the Father to those who choose to come to Him.

The word translated “labor” means *to grow weary or to be exhausted*. Paul worked to the point of exhaustion to share the Gospel. Colossians 1:28-29 says, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.” The word translated “heavy laden” means *to load a burden on or to place a burden on someone*. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is in Luke 11:46 where we read, “And He said, ‘Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.’” In this passage, we see that the Pharisees, scribes and lawyers loaded heavy burdens on the people by their interpretations of the law. At the same time that they loaded heavy burdens on others by giving them many rules, these men avoided even carrying out a little tiny part of the loads that they loaded on others.

In contrast to the heavy load that these religious leaders put on the people, Jesus said, “Come to me and I will give you rest.” The word that is translated “rest” means *to rest, to refresh or to keep quiet and calm*. The word is used in 1 Peter 4:14 where we read, “If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.” In this verse, we see that God causes His Spirit to rest on us when people speak evil against us for the sake of Christ. The rules of the religious were like a heavy yoke.

Then, Jesus gave a very vivid illustration to explain what He meant. The word translated “yoke” was used to speak of “*the heavy wooden yoke that was placed on a team of oxen so that they could pull a heavy load or the yoke that was placed on a slave by his master*”. 1 Timothy 6:1 says, “Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and *His* doctrine may not be blasphemed.” With oxen, the people would put a young ox in a yoke with an older ox so that the young ox would learn to walk in step as he helped pull the yoke. When the yoke was first placed on a young ox, he would often go too fast or too slow. Either way, it would pull on the neck of the older ox.

Jesus told those burdened with sin to yoke up with Him. Jesus explained that He was gentle and patient. Jesus said that all those who came to Him would experience rest from the burden of their sins and the burdens that religious leaders placed on them. Jesus said that His yoke is easy. The word translated “easy” means *useful or kind*. The word translated “light” speaks of something this is light and not a burden. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is 2 Corinthians 4:17 where we read, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Christ takes our heavy load and gives us an eternal blessing in exchange. We also want to help our children learn to share that message with others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand this important promise.