

Responding to the Kingdom

BIG IDEA—Jesus reveals that because of his relationship with the Father, knowing him is the only way to enter into the Kingdom and know God. He offers a gracious invitation to all who are weary & burdened to come to him for rest and a dire warning for those who reject him

1. Intro

- We are in Matt 11-13
- Prior to this, Jesus has been teaching and preaching about the KOH and revealing himself as the Christ ... the King of the Kingdom
 - But Jesus isn't meeting everyone's expectations
 - He's not the king they expected him to be
 - He's ushering in a kingdom different from what they had hoped for
- And as a result, people are rejecting Jesus

- As in Jesus day, so too in ours, people will reject Christ, when he doesn't meet their expectations
 - When he doesn't fit into the box that we think ought to define who he is and what he does

- There are many expectations people have of Jesus
 - **Baby Jesus** > cute cuddly lying in manger, doesn't have any influence or significance for life
 - **NRMA Jesus** > call on Jesus whenever you're in need
 - **Vending Machine Jesus** > go to Jesus to get the things you want
 - **Moral Jesus** > who tells and shows you how to live a good life
- When people find the Jesus of the gospel's, the real Jesus ... isn't like ... that they reject him

- And in the passage we're looking at this morning, Jesus gives a dire warning to those who reject him because he doesn't fit their expectations

- Which raises the question?
 - How do you ensure you have the right expectations ... and therefore not fall into the same error as the Jews in Jesus time ... which meant they were not part of God's kingdom?

- What Jesus makes clear in these verses is ... you and I can't work it out ourselves
 - We need Jesus to reveal himself to us

- If you and I want to know Christ so we might respond to him
 - then we can only know him and respond to him ... by him revealing himself to us
- This morning we're going to explore the theme of responding to Jesus and his kingdom
 - Revelation of the Kingdom
 - Rejection of the Kingdom
 - Reception of the Kingdom

2. Revelation of the Kingdom (v25-27)

- First thing we see ... is that when it comes to knowing the truth about the Jesus and the kingdom ... it starts with God
- In v25 Jesus prays
 - *"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children"*
- Here Jesus shows the way God operates
 - *he's hidden these things from the wise and learned*
 - *he's revealed them to little children"*
- What are 'these things' that God hides and reveals?
 - It's the significance of the miracles Jesus has been doing in and around Galilee
 - Jesus referred to this
 - v5 when talking to the disciples of John the Baptist
 - v20-24 when talking to the crowd
- Jesus is saying ... God hides or reveals what his teaching and miracles point to ...
 - that he is the promised Christ / Messiah who's come to usher in his eternal kingdom and bring salvation for all who turn to him
- But notice who he hides from and reveals to
 - He's hidden these things from the 'wise and learned'
 - That is, it's those who
 - Think they are wise
 - Think they know better
 - Believe that they work out God for themselves
 - Reckon they can get to God on their own merits

- On the flip side ... it's the 'little children' that God reveals these things to
 - Not literally little children ... but those who perceive of themselves as 'little children'
 - Dependent
 - Open
 - Willing to be taught
 - Humble

- But then Jesus goes on to say in v27 ... all things have been committed to him by the Father
 - Such is the relationship between the Father and the Son, that the Father gives all knowledge and authority to Jesus
 - Which as we see in the second half of the verse, includes the revelation of God
 - *"No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."*

- In other words, it's through Jesus ... and his revelation of himself that we come to know God
 - And because Christ knows the Father ... and the Father knows the Son ... when we see Christ and know him ... we see the Father and know God

- It's an astonishing claim!
- Jesus is saying ... if you want to know me and have right expectations about me
 - then you need to know I am God
 - because when you see me ... you see the Father
 - And because I am the one the Father has committed all things
 - That means I am the Lord of the Heaven and Earth
 - I'm the one who rules all things including your life
 - I'm the one who will judge all things at the end of time
- And all of that can only come because Jesus reveals himself to us

- **Application**
- For many people, knowing God or not ... is an intellectual exercise
- Some will seek to prove God's existence through various philosophical or experiential arguments
- They'll cite

- World is complex and has the marks of design, therefore there must be an intelligent designer behind it all
- The cosmos cannot have come into existence on its own > something or someone must have been there to start it
- Others with a more atheistic take on God will seek disprove God's existence by their own philosophical and intellectual arguments
- They'll cite
 - Problem of suffering in the world
 - Science disproves the existence of God
- Both sides try to outsmart each other using intellectual and philosophical arguments to determine whether God is real or not
 - What they both fail to realise is that knowing / not knowing God is not about us
 - discovering God
 - disproving God
 - finding God
 - working God out or not
 - You don't find him at the end of a philosophical telescope
 - It's about God revealing himself to us through his Son
 - It's about Jesus Christ coming into the world and making God known
- Which means ...we don't find God because we are
 - born into a Christian family
 - go to Christian school
 - take ourselves off on some spiritual journey to find the meaning to life ...
- We need him to reveal himself to us in Christ
- So when it comes to having the right expectations of Christ ...
 - We need Jesus to reveal himself to us
 - We need Jesus to show us what he's like
- To formulate expectations of him apart from what he reveals about himself will only lead us to false conclusions and disappointments
- You can't discover him or work him out on your own
- No ... you and I need him to reveal himself to us

3. Rejection of the Kingdom (v20-24)

- Now in v20-24, we see an example of what happens when Christ does reveal himself ... and people don't like what they see ... so they reject what him
- What we see in these verses ... is an example of the 'wise and learned' ... not seeing the truth about Christ and ignoring the revelation of himself that he brings to them

- In these verses Jesus gives the examples of the towns of Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum
 - See from the map these are all towns in the heart of Galilee
 - Much of Jesus ministry was done in his home region of Galilee¹
 - The people of Galilee had seen Jesus power and authority demonstrated in convincing style over and over again
 - And yet they continue to reject Jesus
 - They are hard hearted, distracted and rebellious

- And because of this Jesus pronounces judgment on them
- And in v21 he singles out Korazin and Bethsaida²
- Jesus compares these towns to Tyre & Sidon
 - Both of them were Gentile cities ... enemies of Israel ... who in OT times were constantly invading Israel, abusing the people and carrying off their treasures³
- Jesus says in v21 –
 - *"If the miracles that were performed in you (Korazin and Bethsaida) had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."*
- In other words, if those enemies of God's people had seen what you saw ...
 - They'd wearing sackcloth and putting ash on their head as a mark of humility and repentance

- This is shocking right? Jesus says to these Israelites ...
 - You're being even more hard hearted, wicked and rebellious than Israel's enemies!

- Even more shocking is what Jesus says next in v22

¹ All the miracles Jesus did in Ch 8-9 done in Galilee. For example, the healing leper, Centurions servant, demoniac, paralytic, blind men, mute, calming storm, feeding 5000 (Luke 9)

² Healing blind man, and feeding of 5,000

³ Ezekiel 26:2-7

- *But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the Day of Judgment than for you.*
- What shocking about this is ... if you read the OT prophets like Isaiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Zechariah ... both these cities were universally condemned by God for their repeated attacks on God's people
 - They already stand condemned
 - YET ... these Galilean cities ... cities full of Israelites > Jesus is saying judgment will be worse for them!
- And the make sure they get the point, he makes the same contrast between Capernaum and Sodom
- Capernaum – probably the city where Jesus lived most of the time when he was in Galilee and therefore the place where he did most of his miracles
 - So these guys had no excuse!
 - They saw and heard Jesus in full flight
- Sodom on the other hand – is the archetype of evil
 - In the OT Sodom was condemned by God for its great wickedness and sinning against the Lord⁴
 - In one account ... the men of Sodom tried to rape the men who went into Sodom to rescue Abraham's nephew, Lot⁵
 - And in judgment on Sodom, God rained down burning sulphur and destroyed it for its wickedness
- And yet Jesus says in v24
 - *It will be more **bearable for Sodom** on the Day of Judgment than for Capernaum*
- You see how shocking it is what Jesus is saying?!
 - "Even **Sodom** ... the epitome of wickedness would've responded better to me than you lot"
- And as a result ...
 - Sodom will be judged better than **Capernaum!!**
 - Not because Capernaum is morally worse ... but because they stubbornly refused to acknowledge the revelation Jesus was giving them of himself and the Kingdom

Implication

⁴ Gen 13:13

⁵ Gen 19:4-5

- So Jesus is laying down a serious warning to the crowds who have been rejecting him and all that he has been teaching and doing
 - Their dismissal of him as the Christ is no small thing
 - It's serious
 - And this comparison he's making to Sodom, Tyre & Sidon is meant shock them out of their complacency, arrogance and self-sufficiency ... and start to take the revelation Christ is giving of himself seriously

Application

- And it's a warning for all generations, and it's a warning for us today
- If you and I hear the good news about Jesus and yet reject Jesus ... then we will face his judgment
 - Judgment is serious
 - You do not want to face the judgment alone
- Now Jesus doesn't say this because he delights in judgment ...
 - No! He warns us of it ... so we won't face it
 - He's come to die for sin and **spare** you and I from that judgment
 - He offers the way to be saved from that judgment
 - He doesn't want his death to be for nothing
- But if you hear the gospel ... if you hear about Christ and his death and resurrection for sin ... and
 - ignore that; and
 - think it's not relevant ... or important ... or worth responding to
- Then Jesus warning to you is ... you'll be worse off Tyre, Sidon and Sodom
- It's serious stuff to reject Jesus and the truth he reveals to you about himself
- He gives you all the evidence ... it's all there to see for yourself
 - Four gospel accounts of Jesus life
 - The witness of Paul ... a man who hated Jesus and Christians and yet saw the resurrected Jesus and was converted and gave his life to proclaiming this truth to the world
 - Non-Christian writings of people like Josephus and Tacitus and Pliny that attest to Jesus
- The evidence is before us ... just like the evidence was before the people of Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum
 - The question is ... what will you do with that evidence?

- What will you do with the revelation you've been given?
- Will you rebel and reject it?
 - Because if you continue to do so ... you do so at your own peril

- What Jesus says here should shock us out of our complacency
 - These were not outwardly wicked towns ...
 - But their eternal fate is worse ... because they'd heard the gospel and yet did not repent
 - Christ had revealed himself to them in no uncertain terms ... but they ignored it

- This challenges us who hear the gospel and yet sit on the fence and remain uncommitted
 - You maybe a moral, decent and respectable person ...
- But Jesus is saying ...
 - If you deliberately reject the offer of salvation I bring and think it doesn't matter and think you'll be okay with God ...
 - It will be worse for you because of that than Sodom, Sidon and Tyre

- You may be here today and you've never heard the gospel or you're not clear on who Jesus is, and what he did and what he taught ... and you'd like to find out
- You might be here today and be thinking ...
 - "I'm hearing the warning ... help me know more"
- Come along and do our Life of Jesus course
 - Or let us know via Comms Card you'd like to know more and we'll help you with that

- Wherever you are at with Christ ... I hope this helps guard you against complacency and shocks you out of any lethargy you may have towards him
 - If that's you ... make today the day you take a fresh look at Jesus and begin to take him seriously

4. Reception of the Kingdom (28-30)

- Jesus not only gives a warning to those who reject him
- He also calls on the crowds to respond to him and receive him
- In v28 he says - *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."*
- He says come ... come to me

- And who does he call to come?
 - All who are weary and burdened
- It's a call to everyone!
 - It's not an exclusive invitation
 - It's not a secret invitation
 - It's an invitation to everyone ... because everyone is weary and burdened by something

- What makes you anxious?
- What causes you to lose sleep?
 - These are the things that make us weary and burdened
- Is it
 - Your performance at work
 - Financial situation
 - A particular relationship
 - The approval of others
 - Sick parent or child
 - Uncertainty about the future
- Jesus says ... come to me ... all of you who are weary and burdened by these things ... and I will give you rest for your souls
- In others words, when you come to Jesus ...
 - The burden, the weight, the anxiety, the worry ... is lifted!
 - There's a peace and comfort ... a rest you experience when you come to Christ with these things

- How's he going to give you that rest?
- Jesus says
 - *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me ... and you will find rest for your souls"*

- What's a yoke?
 - Not an egg yolk!
 - Yoke is a wooden frame that went over the shoulders of a pair oxen to help them pull a heavy cart or wagon
 - The yoke joined them together like a harness, so that wherever one went the other had to follow
 - Jesus says come and take **my** yoke upon you
- That's the kind of relationship Jesus is offering
- In Jesus day ... disciples yoked themselves to teachers

- Whether it be
 - disciples of Pharisees or Teachers of the Law or
 - in Greek culture ... disciples would yoke themselves to philosophers like Plato, Socrates and Aristotle
- In those days you
 - lived with and served the teacher
 - learnt from them
 - ... you were totally yoked to the teacher in every way
- So when Jesus is saying to take his yoke upon you ... what he's saying is ... come be my disciple
 - I want you to come and let me teach you ... guide you and grow you
 - I want you to join yourself to me and make me the centre of your life
- That's how you find rest

- How does that work?
- How does yoking yourself to Jesus help you find rest from being weary and burdened
- If it's finances that are burdening you
 - Jesus says in Matt 6 ...
 - I know all the things you need,
 - and if I provide for the birds of the air
 - and I clothe fields with lilies
 - how much more will I give you what you need
 - And when we yoke ourselves to Jesus ...
 - he teaches us that our true riches are spiritual and in heaven ...
 - and so we can be content without riches now ...
 - because we know in Christ we have more than if we had gained the whole world

- If its relationships that are burdening you ...
 - Bible teaches us that God made us for relationships ... relationship with each other and with him
 - Relationships are one of the great blessings of life ... but we know sin has fractured and broken relationships
 - So if our life's happiness is built on a human relationship ... we will always be disappointed and let down ... because no-one is perfect
- But Jesus Christ is perfect ... and he will never let you down
 - He is the ultimate friend, spouse, brother
 - God is the ultimate Father ...

- And so in him we have a relationship that we can depend upon even when others are struggling
- If it's your approval with others that's burdening you ... the approval of your parents, friends, boss, peers
 - You're constantly trying to win approval
 - Many times you fail and feel miserable
 - But even if you succeed ... you've got the burden of constantly
 - working, working, working at gaining and maintaining that approval
 - and worrying about whether you have it or not
 - But when you're yoked to Christ ... you know you're yoked to the one who already has your approval
 - He's demonstrated that for you by laying down his life for you
 - At the cross, he says ... "My approval of you ... my love for you is so strong, I'm will die for you"
 - And so you know you have approval from the one who really matters ... which means you won't be wearied and burdened by constantly seeking the approval of others
- And so Jesus says
 - Take my yoke ...yoke yourself to me
 - Because I'm the only one who will give you true rest
- Of course **rest** is the great goal of the Bible
 - On the seventh day God rested after creating the heavens and earth
 - God commanded his people to rest on Sabbath
 - The Israelites were seeking God's rest in Promised Land
- And as you read the New Testament you see that each of those is just a shadow that's pointing forward to the real rest for our souls that we all need ... which is the rest of eternal life
- And so not only does Jesus give rest **now** for all who are weary and burdened who come to him and take his yoke upon them
 - Jesus gives rest for our souls in eternity
- When you and I are like the little children Jesus speaks of in v25, and recognise the burden of your sin ...
 - When you come to Christ ... there's rest

- For Christ has taken that burden for you already and paid for it at the cross
- Which means you and I don't need to
 - weary ourselves trying to please God with our good deeds
 - be anxious about whether or not we have done enough to satisfy God
 - lose sleep over whether or not the burden of your sin can be removed
- Because when you yoke yourself to Jesus Christ, he takes burden on himself
 - Which means your soul can rest ... now and forever

5. Conclusion

- You and I need Jesus to reveal himself to us if we're going to know what he's like
 - And the gospel shows us exactly what he is like
 - He's gentle and humble in heart
 - So gentle that he...
 - welcomed little children⁶
 - had compassion on sick and suffering
 - was merciful to the sinners, tax collectors and prostitutes
 - So humble he
 - washed the feet of his disciples
 - was willing to go the cross and die for you and I
- So friends go to him ... go to him like little children
 - Don't reject him ... that's a terrible option
- Go to him ... receive his offer
 - take his yoke upon you
 - and you will find rest for your soul

PRAY

⁶ Matt 18:1ff, 19:13ff