

A call to the Little Flock
Matthew 11:25—12:1

A call to the Righteous Remnant (verses 25—27)

After denouncing the cities that rejected His testimony, Jesus calls out to those who will believe—the Little Flock or Righteous Remnant of Israel. Those who are wise by world standards are foolish by spiritual standards. This is because worldly standards are completely opposed to heavenly standards. The flesh naturally rejects spiritual things and spiritual things are an affront to fleshly things. This principle is cross-dispensational (John 3:6; Galatians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 1:26—31). In verse 25 the infants are the remnant. They don't come to Christ with a lot of human wisdom and knowledge but as a child who is innocent and trusting, willing to receive what Christ is preaching. I don't believe we need to have a childlike faith (I'm not even sure what that means) to come to Christ but we do need to be open and receptive of His message and, putting aside our human pride, come to Him humbly. Jesus said this Little Flock needed to receive the Kingdom like a child in order to illustrate what He meant by the parable of the Pharisee and publican in Luke 18:9—17.

Verse 27 continues with the proclamation that if you know the Son you will know the Father and if you know the Father you will know the Son. This shows equality between Father and Son as God. Both are equal in essence but have individual personalities and different functions. The Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God but the Father is not the Son and the Father is not the Holy Spirit and the Son is not the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: (NASB)

Hebrews 1:8 But unto the Son he [the Father] saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

John 20:27—28 ²⁷ Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. ²⁸ And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

I believe all things being handed over to the Son has to do with believers. Before the Son revealed himself, before He was born of a woman, believers needed to believe the Father. Abraham knew nothing of Christ, nor did Moses, Joshua, King David nor any other Old Testament saint. However, they knew, trusted and obeyed the Father. Their future in the Kingdom was given to them because of their faith in the Father.

Now with the Second Person of the trinity coming to earth as Jesus, Israel was being called to believe on Him instead of the Father. This is why it was important for Israel to understand that he who knew the Son also knew the Father (Luke 10:22; John 5:23; 14:7—9; 8:19). From John 6:44 we learn that no one would have come to the Son unless the Father had drawn them to Him. In other words, there were those in Israel who believed in the Father and now that the Son was in their midst it was the Father's job to bring those believers to the Son. These people believed what God told them through the prophets just as Jesus pointed Israel back to the prophets to show them who He was (John 5:39—40). All those whom the Father had in His hand would now be entrusted to the Son.

The call in verse 28 is to those who will believe within Israel. Israel has been under God's arm of discipline for hundreds of years. They have been reaping the curses of Leviticus 26 for not obeying His Law. Now, after years of suffering He is giving them the hope of the Kingdom and with it a time of refreshing (Acts 3:19). Israel is also burdened by the demands of the Mosaic Law. It was viewed as a yoke back then (Acts 15:10; Galatians 5:1) and even today the "yoke of the Torah" is assumed at a bar mitzvah or when a Gentile converts to Judaism. On top of this, the Pharisees and other religious leaders added their own set of rules and regulations burdening Israel even more.

Jesus compares this heavy yoke of Judaism with His light yoke. It was impossible for any Israelite to fulfill all 613 ordinances contained in the Mosaic Law and completely unfeasible to obey the additional rules and regulations heaped on them by the Pharisees. However, Israel will be given the ability to perfectly obey even the minutest part of the Law after Christ comes back to reign as their King. Those Israelites who go into the Kingdom will be cleansed and given a new heart and given the Spirit so they can walk in His statutes (Ezekiel 36:24—27; Jeremiah 31:33). They will no longer be burdened by a Law that is impossible to keep, one that can only condemn and bring death. Instead they will be enjoying the times of refreshing in the Kingdom. The burden will have been lifted and all things will have been restored.

In contrast to this, we in the Body of Christ is free from the Law because of our position in Christ. The Holy Spirit today has baptized all believers into Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). This is the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5. Since we are identified with Christ by this baptism we have in effect died with Him and therefore the Law can have no hold on us (Romans 7:4—6).

Confronting extraneous Levitical laws

The first part of chapter 12 is focused on Christ confronting the religious leaders with laws they set up in addition to the Mosaic Law. They added these laws to make it harder for the people to breach the Mosaic Law. They were in effect setting up a hedge of protection around the Mosaic Law supposedly making it harder to disobey it.

There are six recorded works that Jesus does on the Sabbath day to challenge the Pharisees; pick grain (Matthew 12:1—8; Mark 2:23—28; Luke 6:1—5), heal a man with a withered hand (Matthew 12:9—15; Mark 3:1—6; Luke 6:6—11), heal woman bent over (Luke 13:10—17), heal man with dropsy (Luke 14:1—6), heal lame man (John 5:1—18) and heal blind man (John 9:1—16). These things were specifically and purposefully done on the Sabbath to bring home the point that man was not made for the Sabbath but the Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27). This is born out in creation in that man was created before the Sabbath was instituted.

The Sabbath

The term *Sabbath* comes from the Hebrew word *Shabbat*, which means end, rest or cease. We see the first Sabbath occurring on the seventh day when God rested from His work of creation. The Sabbath has always been on the seventh day and has never been changed to the first day of the week, contrary to what many churches teach. God blessed and sanctified the Sabbath day (Genesis 2:3), meaning it has been set apart from the rest of the days of the week as special unto the Lord.

When the Mosaic Law was given to Israel they were commanded to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy—set it apart from the other six days of the week. They were to do this by resting from their work (Exodus 20:8—11), just as God did after creating the heavens and the earth for six days.

Hebrews adds another dimension to the Sabbath. From Hebrews 3:4 and 4:1, 9—11 we see a connection between the Sabbath and the Millennial Kingdom. Although it should be obvious that Hebrews is written to the Hebrew people—Israel—most people take this book for the Church, the Body of Christ. When you realize this and understand that the Sabbath was instituted as a picture of the future rest they would experience in the Millennial Kingdom then it's easy to see that we are not in view here at all. When Jesus was going through Israel and healing all the people he was demonstrating that time of rest and refreshing they would experience in the Kingdom. When Jesus healed on the Sabbath He was tangibly connecting the Sabbath with the Millennial Kingdom by bringing these people a joy and revitalization that will come in the Kingdom (Acts 3:19). He was also showing the Pharisees that they didn't understand the Sabbath was actually given as a gift to man.

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