

Twice Invited

By Divine inspiration, Matthew recorded two invitations from our Lord to mankind. Both are compelling, yet there are distinct differences between the two.

In Matthew 11:28-30 we read what is often referred to as “The Great Invitation.” “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” This invitation is a call to those who are burdened with sin and weary from the struggles of life. A rest far beyond a mere good night’s sleep is offered to those who answer the call. The Lord offers inner peace that passes all understanding while in this life (Philippians 4:7) as well as rest from labors in eternity (Revelation 14:13).

This invitation is extended by the One who is meek and lowly in heart and whose yoke is easy and burden is light. Contrast that with the invitation of the prince of darkness who invites us to a life burdened with the weightiness of sin (Hebrews 12:1). Just as Satan invited Jesus to fall down and worship him (Matthew 4:9), he invites us to enjoy the pleasures of a reprobate life, but only for a short time (Hebrews 11:25). Jesus offers rest. The devil offers unrest (Matthew 13:42).

This invitation is a standing one, available to all who will hear and respond while he or she has breath. It has no expiration date while the earth exists. A reply to it produces the same blessings for all, man or woman, rich or poor.

The second invitation is found in the great judgment scene in Matthew 25: “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.” (Matthew 25:31-33). Verse 34 contains this second invitation. “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” As does the first, this invitation offers bountiful blessings to those who respond. Those thus invited shall be ushered into “life eternal” (Matthew 25:46) and the joys associated with being with the Lord forever (Revelation 21-22).

The second invitation is given by the same One who offered the first. As the King of kings, Jesus is eminently qualified to offer this invitation. In fact, seeing as how “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12), there is no one else but Jesus who could extend such an invitation.

There are two invitations extended by Jesus. They have similarities, but here are the dramatic differences between the two. The first one is offered to all while the second is offered only to a limited number, namely, the righteous. The first one is offered in this life while the second is offered after this life is over.

Why is it important to understand the differences between the two invitations? Simply put, we have to heed the first invitation in order to hear the second one. The first is an invitation to follow Christ, thus obeying His will. Taking His yoke upon us involves casting off servitude to sin and rendering humble obedience to the Lord (Romans 6:13). The second is an invitation to those who have done just that. The sequence of these invitations is neither accidental nor coincidental. The Lord did not offer eternal life prior to us coming to Him. The order is to come to Him in this life and then be invited to come and be with Him in eternity.

Twice the Bible records the Lord offering invitations. Each one begins with the word, “come,” a word which according to Strong’s Concordance is contextually an interjection. As such it expresses emotion. Today we use exclamation points when we write sentences containing interjections. As the word is used in these invitations it expresses a warm welcome, while perhaps adding a sense of urgency to the first of these.

Dear reader, you and I have been invited by none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself to enjoy His rest and peace. Will we respond in humble obedience so that we may enjoy those blessings while on earth and then hear the second invitation on the Day of Judgment?

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