

Jan. 8, 2016

Genesis 14-15 – Abraham and Melchizedek.

Matthew 11 – John the Baptist; a look at man's excuses for rejection of God's grace and truth.

Ecclesiastes 3:9-15 – Eternity and Judgment for our lives on earth

Reflections:

Genesis 14-15. There is debate among believers regarding Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20). Some believe that he was a historical person, while others believe that he was an appearance of pre-incarnate Christ (Christophany) because of his mention in Hebrews 7. However, in Genesis, Melchizedek is presented in an ordinary, historical manner as he meets and speaks with Abraham in very ordinary manner. The writer of Hebrews is simply using him as a type of Christ. So, he was not a Christophany. In Gen. 15:17, the Bible speaks of "the sun going down." How does this square with our belief that every word in the Bible is without error since it carries with it the very authority of infallible and omniscient God. It should be noted that the Bible is not making an ontological claim about the sun actually setting or rising. It is simply employing the same kind of observational language that we employ today. It is a regular part of any modern weather forecaster to announce the time of "sunrise" and "sunset." For one to make a charge against the infallibility of the Word based on this language would require one to make charges against modern weathermen for also being being unscientific and incorrect. Moreover, the flat earth myth that is usually part of this charge against the Bible is also false. For when God makes ontological statements about the earth as such, He describes it accurately as such: as spherical and suspended in space (Job 26:7; Isa. 40:21-22).

Matthew 11. Note the wavering of John the Baptist in the first few verses. Jesus had said that John was the greatest born among women, but here John had doubts due to preconceived ideas about how the Kingdom that was to be ushered in by Jesus. No matter how great a believer is, if he has false presuppositions it will lead to problems with his faith and spiritual life. It is very important for every believer to regularly examine his basic presuppositions, by examining them against the Word of God, rather than just assume that God or His plan should be or go a certain way. Following the narrative about John, note the various excuses people use to reject God's grace. Notice how they attack the various messengers—negative volition can always find something wrong with a messenger when they want to reject the message. Note, moreover, one of the most beautiful verses in the Bible, verse 28. Thank God for such promises!

Ecclesiastes 3:9-15. Verse 11 says that God placed "eternity" in the hearts of man. Eternity awaits us all. For some it will be everlasting joy beyond imagination. For those who reject God's grace, it will be immeasurable suffering for all of eternity. Verse 15 says that everyone is accountable. This includes all believers. That accountability will extend through all of eternity in the form of rewards and special privileges with the Lord Jesus Christ. What a blessing it will be to hear Jesus say 'well, done, good, and faithful servant, enter into My joy.' What a contrast it will be for unfaithful believers who do not care about what Jesus thinks of their earthly lives—there will certainly be enormous regret for those who put the incentives of this world before Christ's incentives. For one not to care about rewards is not to care about Jesus's commendations for a faithful earthly life. The rewards and commendations always go together. On the issue of judgment of believer at the Judgment Seat of Jesus Christ, it needs to be emphasized that there will be no punishment for sins. However, rewards are always related to how one

lives his life, and how one lives his life is always related to sin vs. experiential righteousness. Although it is common in our movement to teach that one will be rewarded based on the amount of doctrine he has, this is a false teaching. The Bible is explicit: a person is rewarded based on his works: 'your works will follow you' (Rev. 14:13) for all of eternity in the form of capacity and privileges for all of eternity. This does not mean that doctrine is not important for how can one have good deeds apart from Bible doctrine? It does mean, however, that it is how one lives his life that will be the basis of rewards or shame at the Judgment Seat, not the amount of Bible doctrine that one has or being in some imaginary conduit circle. Again, this is not to downplay the importance of doctrine. For example, how would a wife know that she is to honor her husband as her earthly lord (which certainly means, at the bare minimum, never saying anything to ridicule or demean him in any way in public) apart from Bible doctrine? How would a husband know that he is to love his wife as Christ loves the church (which, at bare minimum, means never demeaning her in any way to anyone at any time) apart from Bible doctrine? Now there are "doctrinal" wives (who know a lot of doctrine) who regularly speak badly, ridicule, point out shortcomings, and fail to follow their husband's leadership. There are also "doctrinal" husbands who speak badly, fail to love and cherish, and even bully their wives. There are also Christian husbands and wives who do not have much doctrine but who take seriously God's mandates for the wife (read 1 Peter 3:1-6) and the husband (read Eph. 5:25-31). Now, if their works really do follow them, which one will be honored by the Lord? The one with a lot of doctrine but lives an ugly worldly and disrespectful manner with respect to their spouse or the one who lives out the beautiful truths of the Word of God? While people often use as an excuse to be anti-intellectual when it comes to understanding the nature of God and metaphysics of the Bible "do not lean on your own understanding," that phrase has nothing to do with attempts to understand God and reality. It has everything to do with His commands, "His ways," on how one is to live his life, all of which are explicitly spelled out for the Christ-centered life in marriage, the local church, and all else. Both the general reference to judgment in Ecclesiastes 3:15 and the specific reference to the Judgment Seat of Christ in 2 Cor. 5:10-11 treat the judgment in terms of "fear"—our daily lives really do matter for all of eternity. Ecclesiastes 3:15, And God requires an account of what is past. Quo Vadis?