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The “Easy Yoke” and “Light Burden” of Jesus

Have you ever wondered how Jesus could say that his yoke was easy and his burden light? When you stop and consider all that he endured during his earth-walk as the incarnate Son of God, it seems to be a shocking statement to say the least.

Born as the prophesied Messiah, he had a target on his head even as a baby. King Herod felt so threatened by the prospect of the prophesied King that he sought to kill all male children in Bethlehem two years old and younger. As a youth he was, no doubt, tempted in every way to sin just as any teen would be.

When he stood in the temple to announce his identity as the anointed one of God, the people of the synagogue ran him out of town and tried to push him over a cliff. He said that he had no place to lay his head. He wept sorely for the spiritual condition of his beloved Jerusalem and was continually belittled, challenged, and ridiculed by the religious leaders of his day. He was called illegitimate, a winebibber, a sinner, and even a demon-possessed false prophet.

He endured a direct confrontation with Satan that left him so weak the very angels of heaven had to come and minister to him. He lived all of his life with the knowledge that he would be abandoned by his friends, beaten, and brutally crucified. Most of all, he knew that it was his destiny to take upon himself all of the heinous sins of mankind in order to be the sacrificial atonement for the entire human race.

Yet, given all that he had to endure he boldly proclaimed in his famous invitation to rest in Matthew 11:30 *“My yoke is easy, and my burden light.”*

I submit that the key to understanding what Jesus meant by the “easy yoke” and “light burden” lies in an understanding of what specific burden he was referring to. He seems to be declaring that all of fallen humanity carries a burden that he did not carry and he invites us to “come to him” for rest and relief from that specific burden. As cited in the observations of the above paragraphs, he certainly could not have been referring to a lack of emotional strain, concern for loved ones, or rough and dangerous physical living conditions as pertaining to this world.

Often times famous verses are quoted without the context of surrounding verses which shed much light on their meaning. If we back up to the preceding verse, I believe we get a glimpse of the intense burden of the human heart that Jesus promises rest from: *“All things are delivered unto me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.”* (Matthew 11:27).

It seems to me that what our Savior is saying is that if we come to him in faith, he will be faithful to reveal to us the truth of the Father’s heart. He is, in essence, inviting us into the perfect relationship that he alone has with the Father, where there is absolutely no burden of doubt that the Father loves us and is always faithful in that love. Through all of the trials and hardships that Jesus endured, the one burden he never had up until that faithful moment on the cross when he cried *“My GOD, my GOD, why have you forsaken me?”* was the burden of wondering about his Father’s presence

and love for him.

When we see ourselves “yoked together with him” in his death, burial, and resurrection, and “born again” unto eternal life with him, we can know true rest and freedom from the yoke of spiritual blindness that Adam gave us in the fall. When he at last said from the cross *‘FATHER! into thine hands I commit my spirit’* he indicated that even though he had experienced the hellish depths of the fallen mind in feeling as if he had been abandoned and alienated from the Father, the Father had never actually abandoned him.

Jesus said in John 17:3 *“This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent.”* In John 10:10 Jesus said that he came for the express purpose of restoring unto us the abundant life that the thief had stolen, (that is to say a true understanding of the character of God). It is declared further in Hebrews 1:3 that Jesus is the “brightness of His (*The Father’s*) glory and the express image of his person.”

In other words, we can trust that the Father is who Jesus revealed him to be. The entire human race is included and invited into the abundant joy of that perfect relationship in Him. May we all come to know them both in the fellowship of the Spirit and truly experience that abundant life of fellowship and perfect love that he prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

~ Brad Campbell