

## Lesson 10: Chapter 11 “Judgements and Rewards”

### Servant’s preparation:

[http://www.suscpts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew\\_11.pdf](http://www.suscpts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_11.pdf)

### Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

### Remember:

Jesus empowers and sends out his twelve disciples to preach, heal, and cast out demons, focusing on the lost sheep of Israel. He provides them with instructions on how to live and work, emphasizing their reliance on God and warning them about potential persecution. Jesus also emphasizes the importance of acknowledging Him before men and the consequences of denying him.

### Memory verse:

*11:28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

### Lesson opener:

#### Needing Help?

Jesus reveals the pride of men’s hearts who refuse to acknowledge their need and to come to the only one who can help them. This can be well illustrated with a simple skit. Have one teacher pretend to be struggling at home with a plumbing problem. Another teacher can come in saying that he is a plumber. He can show some of his equipment and his qualifications to the class and to 1<sup>st</sup> teacher. The first teacher must, however, reject his help and continue struggling on his own. The plumber simply shakes his head, “Call me when you realize that you need help.”

Jesus said that we must call upon Him when we realize that we have a problem that we cannot fix on our own—our sin problem.

### Lesson Goal:

Come to Jesus, lay down your burdens and instead pick up His yoke and you will find rest.

## Lesson body:

Chapter 11 marks a major turning point in Jesus' ministry. The chapter begins by addressing the impact of Jesus' words and deeds on the people and what His actions reveal about His identity

In a section that extends from 11:2 to 16:16, we notice a contrast between how the people either believe that Jesus is the Messiah or how they reject Him and His teaching.

### **John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus (11:1-19)**

#### **Verse 1: What did Jesus do after sending His disciples to preach?**

In the last chapter 10, we have seen the instructions Jesus gave to His disciples. After He finished, He sent them out. Notice what Jesus did. He also went out to teach and preach. A good teacher doesn't just tell others what they should do. He leads by example. He models. Jesus practiced "with them" discipleship. We should follow Jesus' example. We should disciple others as well and when we do, we should make sure that we are not only teaching truth with our mouth but modeling right behavior with our actions. Actions speak louder than words.

#### **Why did John the Baptist send his disciples to ask Jesus?**

John had now been in prison for a year, to which he had been sent by Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, because he had rebuked his adulterous marriage with his brother Philip's wife.

St. Jerome points out that St. John knew he was going to die soon; therefore, he was sending his disciples to Jesus so they could, therefore, have answers to their questions, come to know Him, and become Jesus' disciples.

Jesus had done many miracles a short time before this encounter with St John's disciples, He had raised the widow's son at Nain [Lk 7] and the ruler's daughter [Mt 9]. St. John's disciples have seen His work which is more convincing than words. The Lord presented a live picture to them. They heard the words of His divine and unlimited love towards humanity and saw His deeds. Finally, He warned them of being offended in Him. For, when they see Him crucified, they, who do not understand His deep mysteries, are going to be offended. This warning is for the disciples of St. John the Baptist not addressed to St. John. For, previously, St. John himself declared the mystery of the cross by saying 'Here is the Lamb of God, that carries the sins of the world' (John 11:29).

#### **How did Jesus describe John the Baptist?**

1. The Lord praised him saying as St. Augustine says, "Surely, John was not a reed shaken by the wind, because he was not carried away by every teaching wind."
2. John is the Elijah who was to come. As written in Malachi 4:5 that a forerunner will come before the Messiah in the "spirit and power of Elijah." That is John. His lifestyle and character were similar to Elijah. Verse 10 is quoting Malachi 3:1.

3. He is the greatest born of women. Jesus shows what He thinks of John in this passage. John had a very special and important role as the final prophet who prophesized the Messiah's coming.

### **Why was John better than a prophet?**

This is because the prophets have prophesied of the Lord's coming, and desired to see Him but were unable to. But as for him, he obtained what they had asked for. He was more than a prophet, because he was a reformer, forerunner and way-preparer, as well as prophet.

### **Who is the least in the kingdom of heaven?**

He is referring to Jesus being younger than John from the point of view of time, but He is the greatest in honor.

Verse 12: John the Baptist came as the forerunner to the Lord Jesus, and thus the way to the kingdom was opened. Every believer is able to steal it violently by living struggle.

Indeed, the kingdom is God's free gift, but it is not offered to the slothful and careless, but rather to those struggling as if they are stealing it.

### **Why did Jesus call him "Elijah" in verse 14, when John, himself said he is not Elijah?**

We do not believe in copying the spirit, Jesus did not mean that John is Elijah coming back to earth but that he has played the role of a previous personality.

Father Gregory the Great says, "The angel spoke to Zechariah concerning John (Luke 1:17) "He will also go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah." Just as Elijah will come prior to the second coming, so does John come prior to the first coming; Also, just as Elijah is the forerun to the coming Judge, so does John forerun the Savior at that time. Therefore, John is Elijah in the spirit, and not in his person."

### **Verses 15-19 – Meaning of the parable of the children in the marketplace:**

Jesus says that this generation is like children. He uses the children here as a negative example when sometimes they are so stubborn.

One set of children invited another set to play, first in a mock wedding, then in a mock funeral, but the dissatisfied group were pleased with neither and would neither dance nor lament. The religious leaders blamed John for His strict, rigid lifestyle. They accused him of having a demon. John did not dance to their tune, and they got mad. They blamed Jesus for the opposite reason. He joined parties. He eats and drinks. He associates with sinners. They wanted Him to follow more of their own religious traditions.

If they admired fasting and penance, then John the Baptist's words should have led them to the Son of God. If fasting appeared sorrowful, why did they not join themselves to Jesus, who came eating and drinking? Whichever way they chose they might have arrived at salvation.

**Application:**

When one's vision is corrupted, he could find for himself all the justification to reject God's work. He cannot stand God's love and His tenderness, and neither does he accept His discipline. He is not attracted to sweet divine words and is not warned by the threats either.

**Woe to the Impenitent [unrepentant] Cities (11:20-24)****What do you think Jesus' purpose is in denouncing these cities?**

Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida are important towns at the north end of the Sea of Galilee. Not only did those cities hear about Jesus, but they also saw, talked and touched Him.

Jesus had done many miracles in those areas; they should have changed their lives, but they did not.

Repentance was often shown externally through sackcloth and ashes. But we see zero cases of sackcloth and ashes in the gospels. No one tears their hair out like Ezra did. No one mourns and weeps like the people of Nineveh did. Why is there no repentance? Because the people thought they were OK. The people thought they were righteous in God's sight. Having become comfortable in their religious lives, they followed the ritual of religion, but their hearts were not changed. Whereas if these blessings were granted to strangers like Tyre and Sidon, they may have repented hastily and returned to God. Capernaum is likewise being condemned as being hard hearted and even more stubborn than Sodom which was the so evil. Even though Sodom was burned, it will be judged eternally because earthly punishment does not cancel the heavenly.

These verses confirm that there are levels of eternal hell because God is a fair judge. There will be different degrees of punishment, according to guilt and opportunities; those whose opportunities have been greater will receive greater punishment if they are neglected.

**Jesus Gives True Rest (11:25-30)****Who are the wise and prudent and who are the babes?**

The opposite of wise is stupid not babes, so He did not mean to refer to earthly meanings and levels of understanding. He hid it from those who are wise, those who are truly haughty and scornful, those who falsely pretend to be great, but in reality, they are only haughty. Who are the babes? They are the simple-hearted people who submit to God. Jesus used the easiest way to give Himself to each of us, by feeding us His body and blood since all humans can eat, even babes can open their mouth and take communion without having to understand theology.

**"The invitation" verses 28-30: Come to Me!!**

A. Jesus, The Son is the way to know the Father:

No one is able to realize who the Father is in His essence except the only Begotten Son, this is why the Son came in our own nature, so He enters with us to God's knowledge.

- B. The Son Calls the weary to enter the true knowledge of relief: In Him we come to discover the immeasurable love of the Father, and we come to know His tenderness towards us. In Christ we have seen the Judge and the Intercessor at the same time. Of whom then shall we be afraid? This is the mystery for the relief of all! The weary are the people who are trying hard in life but are not achieving what they hope for. The goal is continually out of reach. Jesus promises rest. Not physical rest. He did not rest physically at all. But a rest from toiling on our own to achieve the unachievable. He gives us what we are longing for. He fills our hearts. And He gives it as a free gift (Ephesians 2:8-9), which we do not and cannot earn.
- C. The Son Calls upon us to be modest and humble of heart: He still expects us to learn from Him and follow His ways. He wants us to drop down our burdens and worries and pick up His yoke [cross].
- D. The Sweet Yoke: Literally, a yoke was a wooden beam normally used between a pair of oxen or other animals to enable them to pull together on a load when working in pairs. And yet His yoke is not heavy. A command is not burdensome if you love the one who gave it. It is easier to love you enemies than to hate them, it is easier to give to the needy than steel from them, you would live in peace when you follow His laws. We shall not be able to encounter our Christ away from His yoke; neither shall we recognize His Father without His cross.



**Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:**

***The Invitation of Jesus (v. 28)***

Even though Jesus has absolute authority to run your life, He doesn't force Himself on anyone. Instead, He invites everyone.

Notice, it's a personal invitation to a relationship. Jesus says, "Come to me." He doesn't say, "Come to a set of rules," Discipleship is not about adhering to a set of doctrines or performing a set of rituals. It's about coming to Jesus, knowing Him, loving Him, and following Him. Discipleship is about a relationship in which you're known, seen, and loved.

It is also an inclusive invitation. He says, "Come to Me, ALL." Not, "Come to me, some." We know that not everyone will respond to Jesus' invitation.

Finally, it's an attractive invitation. Jesus says, "Come to Me all who are weary and heavily laden." Jesus doesn't care what you are weary and burdened with. No matter who you are, no matter what you've done, no matter how tired or how heavy the burden is, you are invited. You are welcome. You are wanted. This is the radical inclusivity of Jesus' invitation to discipleship.

Maybe the question isn't "Are you tired", but should be, "how tired are you? How beat up and weary are you from all the striving and seeking?" Jesus knows, He sees, and He understands.

### ***Claim The Promise of Jesus (v. 28)***

Next, think about the promise of Jesus to give us rest. How nice does a little rest sound? And notice that Jesus gives us rest, not ask us to earn it. This is grace; It's a gift. And it's at the heart of Jesus' invitation to discipleship. We don't come to Jesus to earn anything. We come to receive His grace, His love, His mercy, His rest. We come to HIM.

No one is saying that following Jesus isn't hard work. One time someone asked a singer, if he was a follower of Jesus. He said, "I try to follow Jesus, but I feel like I'm always trying to catch up." Is that you? Is it being God's child wearing you out? Then let's look at the next phrase:

### ***The Yoke of Jesus (v. 29-30)***

Jesus invites His disciples to take His yoke on their shoulders. What does that mean? Every rabbi had a "yoke" that they expected their students to live by.

Jesus put it this way when He was asked what the greatest commandment was. He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." That's an easy yoke. That's a light burden. That doesn't mean it is easy to do, but it's easy to understand. In every situation, you ask yourself, "what does my love for God require of me in this situation? What does treating someone else the way I want to be treated require of me in this situation?"

Isn't it crazy that Jesus brought the entire law down to two points—love God, and love your neighbor—yet we can't even keep that? How many times have you seen so-called Christians bite, devour, gossip, backbite and slander their fellow brothers and sisters? How rare is it to see a community of believers genuinely bear one another's burdens?

This is why we need grace. This is why we are sometimes weary and heavy laden, because no matter how easy Jesus has made it, no matter how hard we try, we still trip over the law. This is why the next point, the last point, is so important.

***The Heart of Jesus (v. 29)***

“For I am gentle and lowly in heart”. I can trust my heart to a God who is wise in heart, gentle in heart, and lowly in heart. Jesus is with us, sharing our burdens, giving us the strength to overcome.

His yoke is not one of oppression or coercion, but rather one of grace, love, and freedom. It is a yoke that brings us into a relationship with Him, where we learn from Him and grow in our understanding and love for God. It is a yoke that aligns our hearts with His, that guides our steps according to His will, and that empowers us to live a life of purpose and meaning.

Ultimately, as we take on His yoke, we are not left unchanged. We are molded, shaped, and transformed into His likeness. That’s what happens when you journey so close to another. That’s what happens in close proximity and relationships. You begin to see the world through His eyes, to love as He loves, to serve as He serves. His yoke is not a burden, but a tool of transformation.

His invitation goes out to all of us, every weary and burdened soul here today. Come, He says, and find rest. Come, and learn... He is gentle and lowly, kind and full of grace.

