

# Matthew 11 Commentary

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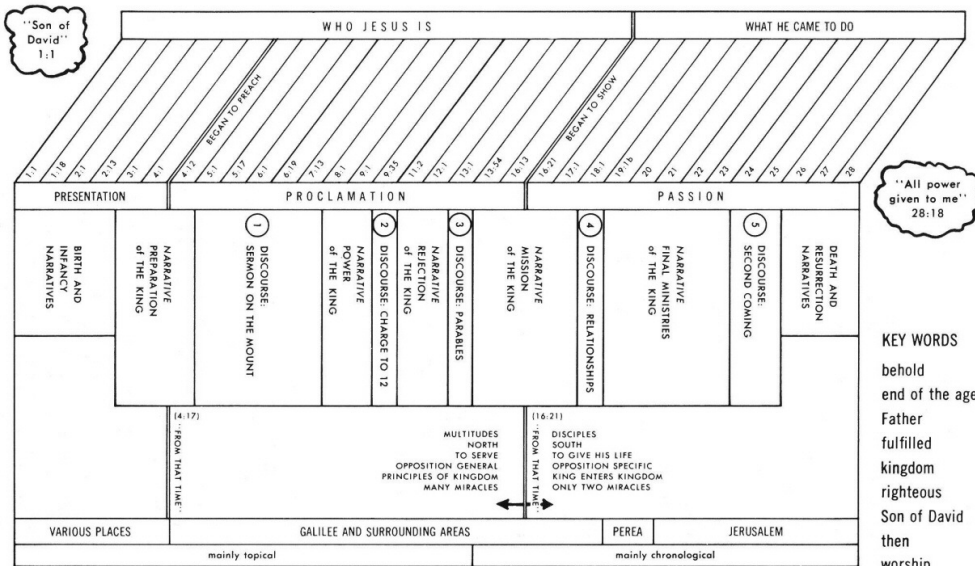
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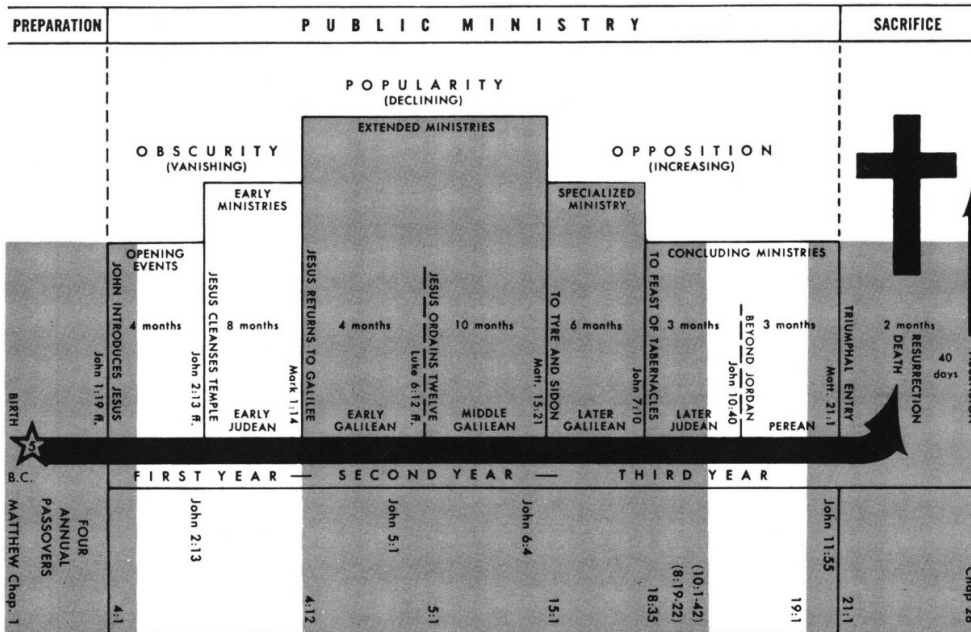
MATTHEW CONTAINS  
15 PARABLES  
20 MIRACLES

KEY VERSES: 1:1 "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

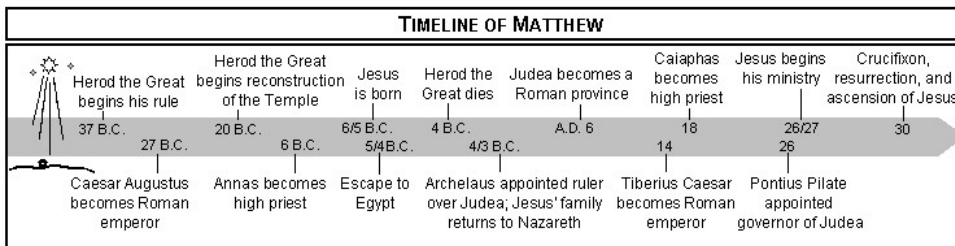
2:2 "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."



**THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED  
 BY MATTHEW (shaded area)**



Click chart to enlarge



Source: Ryrie Study Bible

**Matthew 11:1 When Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.**

NET Matthew 11:1 When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their towns.

GNT Matthew 11:1 Κα γνετο τε τλεσεν ησο ς διατ σσων το ς δ δεκα μαθητα ς α το , μετ βη κεθεν το διδ σκειν κα κηρ σσειν ν τα ς π λεσιν α τ ν.

NLT Matthew 11:1 When Jesus had finished giving these instructions to his twelve disciples, he went out to teach and preach in towns throughout the region.

KJV Matthew 11:1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.

ESV Matthew 11:1 When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.

NIV Matthew 11:1 After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.

ASV Matthew 11:1 And it came to pass when Jesus had finished commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and preach in their cities.

CSB Matthew 11:1 When Jesus had finished giving orders to His 12 disciples, He moved on from there to teach and preach in their towns.

NKJ Matthew 11:1 Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities.

NRS Matthew 11:1 Now when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and proclaim his message in their cities.

YLT Matthew 11:1 And it came to pass, when Jesus ended directing his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.

NAB Matthew 11:1 When Jesus finished giving these commands to his twelve disciples, he went away from that place to teach and to preach in their towns.

NJB Matthew 11:1 When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples he moved on from there to teach and preach in their towns.

GWN Matthew 11:1 After Jesus finished giving his twelve disciples these instructions, he moved on from there to teach his message in their cities.

BBE Matthew 11:1 And it came about that when Jesus had come to the end of giving these orders to his twelve disciples, he went away from there, teaching and preaching in their towns.

- **Giving instructions** - Mt 28:20 Joh 15:10,14 Ac 1:2 10:42 1Th 4:2 2Th 3:6,10 1Ti 6:14
- **He departed** - Mt 4:23 9:35 Isa 61:1-3 Mk 1:38,39 Lu 4:15-21 8:1 Ac 10:38
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 10:42+ "And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward." **And** (kai) ("AND" COUPLES CHAPTER 10 THIS STATEMENT) it came about that when Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.

**Bob Utley** comments that "This chapter has often been described as unrelated stories, but the unifying factor seems to be the answer to the question, "Why was Jesus' ministry not more outwardly successful? John the Baptist is a central character in this chapter (cf. Jn. 1:6–8, 19–36). He was the last of the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah lists several actions by which the Jews could recognize the Messiah. These are the very actions of Jesus recorded in chapters 8 and 9."

In Matthew 11 we find that Jesus begins to experience opposition, that those to whom He came did not receive Him (Jn 1:9-11), that the Pharisees and religious leaders began accusations against Him, that His own family members begin to turn against Him as His teaching became more controversial leading to increasing challenges to His authority. Jesus was not beginning to be seen as a threat to the established religious culture of the day. He was not the type of Messiah Israel was expecting, One Who would defeat the Romans and establish His kingdom on the throne of David and restore Israel to its former glory as the head of the nations. And so many in Israel were disappointed and downcast as a result of the crucifixion. This national attitude was summed up by Cleopas on the road to Emmaus when he said to the resurrected Jesus ("their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him" Lk 24:16+) "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened." (Lk 24:21+) Think of the disappointment they were now experiencing as were many in Israel.

**THOUGHT** - Have you ever been disappointed with Jesus? Did you ever approach Him with a set of expectations, and find that He did not fulfill them? Have you ever felt as if Jesus had let you down? The two disciples on the road to Emmaus felt that way and Jesus rebuked them "And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." (Lk 24:25-27) After their eyes were opened they said "They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" (Lk 24:32) Like most of the Jews they had not believed the Old Testament Scriptures that had clearly predicted a Suffering Messiah, but their disappointment had been turned to joy by the truth about Jesus and the glorious hope that was yet to be fulfilled in the future. In this next section we will see the great man John the Baptist languishing in prison probably wondering why Messiah had not come to his rescue. So for whatever reason, John began to experience some doubts, something I'm sure we can all identify with.

We should not be surprised that most of Israel missed who Jesus really was, for this had been clearly prophesied by Isaiah (740-680

B.C)

**Who has believed our message?** And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. 3 **He was despised and forsaken of men**, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and **we did not esteem Him**. (Isaiah 53:1-3+)

**Comment** - No one should have expected the Messiah to be well-received by His own people at His first coming (Jn 1:9-11+). The Scriptures did not promise He would be well-received the first time and to the contrary promised the very opposite! Interestingly, He will not be "well-received" the [Second Coming](#) as He returns as the **Stone** that crushes all Gentile opposition (Da 2:34. 35+, Da 2:45+, Rev 19:11-15, 16+). He will then establish [His Millennial Kingdom](#) and will finally be "well-received!" At that time He will finally fulfill all of the expectations that the Jews had in the first century, but not until then!

(NAS omits Greek included in KJV = "And it came to pass" - kai egeneto) **When** ([hote](#)) **Jesus** ([2424](#)) [Iesous](#) **had finished** ([teleo](#)) **giving instructions** ([diatasso](#) - present tense) **to His twelve disciples** ([mathetes](#)) - Some see this as another turning point in the Gospel as seen in Mt 7:28; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1 (NB: Each of preceding verses has verb "finish" = [teleo](#)). **Giving instructions** means Jesus had just given detailed instruction about what was to be done. This is probably not the best chapter division as verse 1 really concludes chapter 10. In Matthew 10:1 we read that "Jesus summoned His **twelve disciples** and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness." And then after the 12 are named (Mt 10:2-4 - note apparently Judas Iscariot was able to heal as were the other 11 cf Mt 7:22+), Jesus gives them the real "Jesus Seminar for Disciples" ([contrast the heretical "Jesus Seminar"](#)) in Matthew 10:5-41 and now again mentions the **twelve disciples**. So apparently the twelve went out to minister as instructed. Neither Jesus' sending the disciples nor their return are mentioned. **Robertson** writes that "At the end of the tour the apostles come together in Capernaum and tell Jesus all that they had done and that they had taught (Mark 6:30+, cf Lk 9:10+, Lk 10:17+).

**He departed** ([metabaino](#)) **from there to teach** ([didasko](#) - present tense) **and preach** ([kerusso](#) - present tense) **in their cities** - Jesus had just finished giving instructions to the twelve for their mission and now goes out on His mission to teach the masses. **Teach** and **preach** are both in the [present tense](#) indicating this was Jesus continual activity. Jesus gives us the pattern for how to [Redeem the Time](#), the short time we have on earth! Jesus was doing what He had done at the very beginning as described in Mt 4:23+ "Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, **teaching** ([didasko](#)) in their synagogues and **proclaiming** ([kerusso](#)) the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people." Luke 4:14-15+ adds that after His baptism and temptation "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all." So while proclaiming frequently refers to the Gospel, in this case the specific content of His proclamation is not stated. **In their cities** (the cities of Israel) is not further defined so any statement would be conjecture.

**THOUGHT** - Matthew Henry applies this passage - Our Divine Redeemer never was weary of his labour of love; and we should not be weary of well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not ("Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in **due time** (the right time, the right season = [kairos](#)) we will reap if we do not grow weary. 10 So then, while we have **opportunity** ([kairos](#)), let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." Galatians 6:9-10+. See [Redeem the Time](#); Eph 5:15-16+, Col 4:5-6+).

*We are to do our best for men, and then to hope that our Lord will deign to certify and confirm our teaching by his own coming to men's hearts.*

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - He arranged their missionary tour, and then followed in their wake. It was his plan to send them two and two through the cities of Israel, and then to follow them up in person, and sustain their testimony by his own instruction; for he came "to teach and to preach." We are to do our best for men, and then to hope that our Lord will deign to certify and confirm our teaching by his own coming to men's hearts. The term, "their cities", sounds rather singular. Had our Lord given those cities to the twelve? It would seem so. In a spiritual sense we go first and take possession of the souls entrusted to us, and then the King himself comes in and takes his own at our hands. Lord, give me many souls which may be thine in the day of thine appearing. To this end I would gladly go at thy bidding, and preach thy Word, trusting that I may hear the sound of my Master's feet behind me.

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**Giving instructions** ([present tense](#))(KJV = Commanding) ([1299](#))([diatasso](#) from [dia](#) = through + [tasso](#) = order) means literally to arrange thoroughly, to arrange in its proper order, to issue orderly and detailed instructions as to what must be done. Diatasso was a technical word for carrying out laws and sometimes used by military and government officials (cp Acts 18:2+ Lk 3:13+). It was a word that denoted a command given from an authority. **Zodhiates** explains that diatasso "is not simply to command or give an

order, but to penetrate into a certain situation. This is suggested by the prep. **diá**, through or thoroughly, and **tasso**, to arrange in an orderly manner, e.g., when a person determines the proper arrangement of things or situations, he orders or commands that such arrangements be executed. Note also the derivative **tágrma** (5001), anything arranged in an orderly fashion as a body of troops, a band of soldiers, order, succession of the resurrection as in 1 Cor. 15:23; also the adjective **taktós** (5002), an arranged or proper day as in Acts 12:21<sup>±</sup> referring to the set day in which Herod sat on his speaking platform. This detailed understanding of the basic word **tássō** and its cognates is necessary if we are to properly understand **diatássō** not as a mere capricious ordering or commanding and **diatage** not as an arbitrary commandment, order, ordinance, disposition or appointment, but something that is thought out and proposes orderliness and method. (Complete Word Study Dictionary, NT)"

**Disciples** (3101) **mathetes** from **manthano** = to learn which Vine says is "from a root *math*, indicating thought accompanied by endeavor". Gives us our English = "*mathematics*" - see **matheteuo**) describes a person who learns from another by instruction, whether formal or informal. Another source says **mathetes** is from **math-** which speaks of "mental effort that thinks something through" and thus describes is a learner; a follower who learns the doctrines and the lifestyle of the one they follow. Discipleship includes the idea of one who intentionally learns by inquiry and observation (cf **inductive Bible study**) and thus **mathetes** is more than a mere pupil. A **mathetes** describes an adherent of a teacher. As discussed below **mathetes** itself has no spiritual connotation, and it is used of superficial followers of Jesus as well as of genuine believers. The Lord calls everyone to grow as a disciple (a learner of Christ; cf. also Mt 11:29,30<sup>±</sup>), one who lives in faith, who lives in and by His Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**NIDNTT - (EXCERPT FROM 8 PAGE DISCUSSION OF MATHETES)** - A man is called a **mathētēs** when he binds himself to someone else in order to acquire his practical and theoretical knowledge. He may be an apprentice in a trade, a student of medicine, or a member of a philosophical school. One can only be a **mathētēs** in the company of a **didaskalos**, a master or teacher, to whom the **mathētēs** since the days of the Sophists generally had to pay a fee. An obvious exception to this is when **mathētēs** refers to spiritual dependence on a thinker long since dead. Socrates never wanted to have any **mathētēs** and never regarded himself as a **didaskalos**... It is used to indicate total attachment to someone in discipleship (**Ed**: But see distinction below between a true disciple and a pseudo-disciple of Jesus). The secular Gk. usage of the word in the sense of apprentice, pupil or student is not found... **Mathētēs** in Jn. is often simply a term for "Christian" (**Jn. 8:31+**; **Jn 13:35+**; **Jn 15:8+**)...**mathētēs** has the general sense of "Christian", one who believes in Jesus. (See online 8 page article on **Mathetes** in the **New International Dictionary Of New Testament Theology, volume 1, page 490**)

**Teach** (1321)(**didasko** from **dáo**= know or teach; English = didactic; see study of related noun **didaskalia** and the adjective **didaktikos**) means to provide instruction or information in a formal or informal setting. In the 97 NT uses of **didasko** the meaning is virtually always to teach or instruct, although the purpose and content of the teaching must be determined from the context. In Scripture to **teach** means to pass on the truth about the Word of God, the God of the Word and the faith of the saints, with the goal of influencing the understanding and stimulating obedience to the truth taught and resultant Spirit energized transformation and Christ-likeness. The essence of a **disciple** (**mathetes**, cp Jesus' clear command in Mt 28:18, 19, 20) in fact is that he or she is a learner, and also a "doer" (cp Jas 1:22<sup>±</sup>). The teacher teaches and the disciple hears and processes what is heard, so that this truth affects his or her innermost being (i.e., impacting not just the "head" but especially the "heart!"). Ultimately the purpose of **didasko** is to shape the will of the one taught, to cause it to be conformed to the will of God (cp Ro 12:2).

**Preach** (proclaim) (2784) (**kerusso** or **kerysso** from **kerux/keryx** = a herald - one who acts as the medium of the authority of one who proclamation he makes; **kerugma** = the thing preached or the message) means to proclaim (publicly) or to herald or act as a public crier - the town official who would make a proclamation in a public gathering. **Kerusso** is used of the public proclamation of the gospel and matters pertaining to it as proclaimed by John the Baptist, Jesus, the apostles and other Christian teachers. **Kerusso** was used of the official whose duty it was to proclaim loudly and extensively the coming of an earthly king, even as **our gospel** is to clearly announce the coming of the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:16<sup>±</sup>)! The Imperial Herald would enter a town in behalf of the Emperor, and make a public proclamation of the message which his Sovereign ordered him to give, doing so with such formality, gravity, and authority as to emphasize that the message must be heeded! (Think about this in regard to the Gospel of God instead of the decree of a man! cf 1Th 2:13+). He gave the people exactly what the Emperor bade him give, nothing more, nothing less. He did not dare add to the message or take away from it. Should this not be the example and pattern every preacher and teacher of the holy **gospel of God** seeks and strives to emulate, yea, even doing so with fear and trembling! ("*not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts*" see 1Th 2:4-+) **Lenski** adds that "The point to be noted is that to preach is not to argue, reason, dispute, or convince by intellectual proof, against all of which a keen intellect may bring counterargument. We simply state in public or testify to all men the truth which God bids us state. No argument can assail the truth presented in this announcement or testimony. Men either believe the truth, as all sane men should, or refuse to believe it, as only fools venture to do".

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Matthew "outlines" his Gospel with this phrase **had finished**:

1. (Mt 7:28) **When Jesus had finished these words**, the crowds were amazed at His teaching;
2. (Mt 11:1) **When Jesus had finished giving instructions** to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.
3. (Mt 13:53) **When Jesus had finished these parables**, He departed from there.
4. (Mt 19:1) **When Jesus had finished these words**, He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan;
5. (Mt 26:1) **When Jesus had finished all these words**, He said to His disciples,

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**Phil Newton give background on Matthew 11** - A crisis began to unfold at this point in Christ's ministry (Matt 11-13). Though the unveiling of the kingdom was in full swing, so too was reaction against Christ and His kingdom. Kingdom expectations ran high but disappointments appeared higher, as even those most supportive of Christ struggled to believe. Instead of enthused following, Christ met with unrepentant Galilean cities (Mt 11:20-24) and questioning religious leaders (Mt 12:1-14). His own family and friends from Nazareth questioned Him, with some thinking he had gone mad, and others offended at Him (Mt 12:46-50; Mt 13:53-57). So Jesus Christ began to teach in parables unforgettable lessons of the kingdom (Mt 13:1-52), stressing the value and worth of the kingdom, and its increase in spite of men's opposition and disapproval. The kingdom would grow in effect and power even though many could not understand its dynamics. Some believed but wrestled with doubt. Among their number was John the Baptist. ([Matthew 11:1-6 Settling Doubts](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION OF DISAPPOINTMENT WITH GOD** - I'll never forget a conversation I had with a woman once, many years ago. She used to work in a place where I worked; and when she found out that I was a Christian, she walked up to me and really let me have it. "I was in to that 'Christianity' stuff once," she said; "but turned away from it, and I'll never return to it again. I want nothing to do with the kind of God you Christians worship. He let me down when I needed Him most." I was shocked; but I had the presence of mind to ask her what she meant. She told me that she had a sister that she loved very much. They were best friends. But she came home one day to the horrible sight of her sister in her room - hanging by the neck at the end of a rope. "If there's a God in heaven," she said - in some of the most bitter tones I think I've ever heard - "then why did He let my sister commit suicide? Why didn't He stop her? If that's your God, then I want nothing to do with Him." I wish I could make a really happy ending out of this story; but I'm afraid I can't. I was still very young in the faith; and I didn't know what to say to this poor woman. But if I could go back in time, I certainly would listen to her pain for a while and weep with her over her loss. I'd ask about her sister's life, and let her share with me what she loved about her. But then - after a whole lot of tender and sympathetic listening; and after affirming her pain and frustration over her loss - I think I'd want to gently let her know that she was mad at Jesus for failing to keep a promise that He never made. She had an unfair expectation of Him. She had expected Him to violate the will of one of her loved ones and to prevent her from ever doing anything harmful to herself. And so, when He didn't do what she apparently expected that He had a duty to do, she became disappointed with Him, grew to resent Him, and finally came to rejected Him....I've heard many such stories. Many times, in one way or another, I've been told, "I've tried trusting Jesus; and I found that He didn't help me. It doesn't work to trust Him." Those kind of stories break my heart. But I have say this with love; the problem is never with Jesus when He disappoints our expectations. The problem is always with us and our expectations of Him. We expected Him to do something that He never said He would do. We expect Him to fulfill our expectations on call. And yet, the plain fact is that He isn't obligated to fulfill the expectations we place on Him. But on the other hand, the more I've gotten to know Him, the more He surprises me. As I have gotten to know Him better, I have found that He isn't always what I expected Him to be. But I have always found that He does everything that He promises to do in a way that exceeds my feeble expectations of Him! ([Gregg Allen](#))

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**Oswald Chambers** - Something more about his ways

He comes where He commands us to leave.

When Jesus had made an end of commanding His disciples, He departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities. Matthew 11:1.

If when God said 'Go,' you stayed, because you were so concerned about your people at home, you robbed them of the teaching and preaching of Jesus Christ Himself. When you obeyed and left all consequences to God, the Lord went into your city to teach; as long as you would not obey, you were in the way. Watch where you begin to debate and to put what you call duty in competition with your Lord's commands. 'I know God told me to go, but then my duty was here'; that means you do not believe that Jesus means what he says.

He teaches where He instructs us not to.

"Master, ... let us make three tabernacles."

Are we playing the spiritual amateur providence in other lives? Are we so noisy in our instruction of others that God cannot get anywhere near them? We have to keep our mouths shut and our spirits alert. God wants to instruct us in regard to His Son, He

wants to turn our times of prayer into mounts of transfiguration, and we will not let Him. When we are certain of the way God is going to work, He will never work in that way any more.

He works where He sends us to wait.

“Tarry ye ... until ...” Wait on God and He will work, but don’t wait in spiritual sulks because you cannot see an inch in front of you! Are we detached enough from our own spiritual hysterics to wait on God? To wait is not to sit with folded hands, but to learn to do what we are told.

These are phases of His ways we rarely recognize.

### Matthew 11:2 Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples

NET Matthew 11:2 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds Christ had done, he sent his disciples to ask a question:

GNT Matthew 11:2 ὁ ὠννης κοσας ντ δεσμωτηρ τ ργατο Χριστο π μψας δι τ ν μαθητ ν α το

NLT Matthew 11:2 John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus,

KJV Matthew 11:2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,

ESV Matthew 11:2 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples

NIV Matthew 11:2 When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples

ASV Matthew 11:2 Now when John heard in the prison the works of the Christ, he sent by his disciples

CSB Matthew 11:2 When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent a message by his disciples

NKJ Matthew 11:2 And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples

NRS Matthew 11:2 When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples

YLT Matthew 11:2 And John having heard in the prison the works of the Christ, having sent two of his disciples,

NAB Matthew 11:2 When John heard in prison of the works of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to him

NJB Matthew 11:2 Now John had heard in prison what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him,

GWN Matthew 11:2 When John was in prison, he heard about the things Christ had done. So he sent his disciples

BBE Matthew 11:2 Now when John had news in prison of the works of the Christ, he sent his disciples

- **Now when John, while imprisoned** - Mt 4:12 14:3 Mk 6:17 Lu 3:19 7:18-23 Joh 3:24
- **he sent word by his disciples** - Mt 9:14 Joh 3:25-28 4:1 Ac 19:1-3
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 14:3-5+ For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. 4 For John had been saying to him, “It is not lawful for you to have her.” 5 And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Mark 6:20+ for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.

## DUNGEON OF DOUBT

The title is from Max Lucado's title for this [pericope](#) "Dungeon of Doubt." David Turner refers to Mt 11:2-13:52 as "Growing

Opposition to the Kingdom of Heaven."

**Now when John, while imprisoned** ([desmoterion](#)), **heard** ([akouo](#)) **of the works** ([ergon](#)) **of Christ** ([Christos](#)) - John is inside a dark, damp, dreary prison cell with its cold nights, damp bed, and tasteless food. He has been there for some eighteen months imprisoned not for some crime, but because he stood for the truth! The last mention of John was in Mt 4:12+ "Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee." Matthew explains later "For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. For John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." (Mt 14:3-4+) **Robertson** says John was imprisoned by Herod the prison at ["Machaerus"](#) east of the Dead Sea which at this time belonged to the rule of Herod Antipas ([Jos. Ant. XVIII. v. 2](#))." The fact that John **heard of the works of Christ** shows that while it was still a miserable prison, he still had contact with the outside world through his **disciples** who were allowed to visit him.

Luke fills in some of the blanks...

The disciples of John reported to him about all these things (JESUS CAUSING A YOUNG MAN WHO WAS DEAD TO COME BACK TO LIFE - Lk 7:12-16+). Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, "**Are You the Expected One**, or do we **look for** ([prosdokao](#)) someone else?" When the men came to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, '**Are You the Expected One**, or do we look for someone else?'" (Lk 7:18-20+)

**THOUGHT** - **Look for** ([prosdokao](#)) can also convey the sense of to wait for. The idea is thinking of something that is viewed as yet future and often as in this context includes the sense of longing, expectation and/or anticipation (**THOUGHT** - Does this describe your heart -- longing with expectation and anticipation of seeing Jesus face to face at His [Second Coming](#), (cf 1Jn 3:2+)? Beginning in Lk 7:21 Jesus gives them "proof" that He is indeed the "Expected One." Charles Wesley's great hymn picks up this theme, the first line beginning with a "Maranatha-like" prayer - [Come, thou long expected Jesus](#). Is this the prayer of your heart? It should be! Why? See 2Ti 4:8+ for your answer.

Keep in mind that John had received clear supernatural evidence with Jesus that warranted his recognition of him as the Messiah. For example, the apostle John writes

John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. 33 "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' 34 "**I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.**" (John 1:32-34+)

Clearly John the Baptist had heard from God and saw with His own eyes testified that Jesus was **the Son of God!** No believer today could even come close to the SPECIAL REVELATIONS that John received from God. And so Matthew records the event to which John alludes...

Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. 14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" 15 But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he \*permitted Him. 16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and **behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him**, 17 and **behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased"** (Mt 3:13-17+)

So again notice that John the Baptist SAW and HEARD. In truth what He was privileged to experience was a glorious display of the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Spirit! One might think how much more evidence would anyone need?

**He sent word by his disciples** ([mathetes](#)) - Even though some of his disciples left to follow Jesus (Jn 1:35-37ff+), John the Baptist still had **disciples** and in fact some appear to have continued to adhere to his teachings after Pentecost (see Acts 19:1-6+).

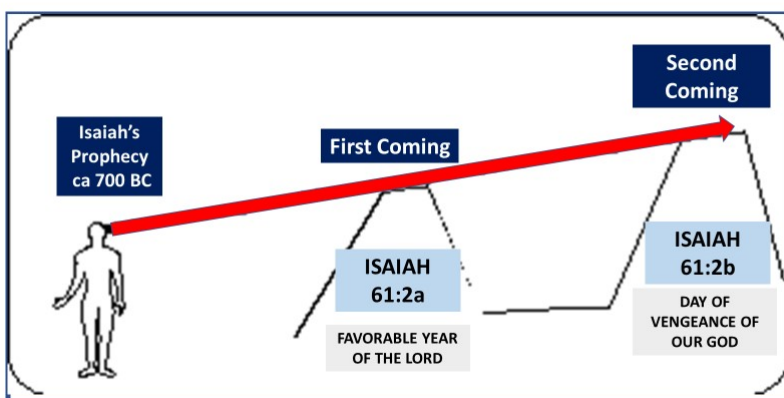
**THOUGHT - FOLLOWERS** are first and foremost **LEARNERS!** Dear Follower of Christ, **how are you doing?** Are you zealously, diligently, actively learning of your Master's ways? Are you growing in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? (2 Peter 3:18+) Are you becoming a "smarter sinner" or are you becoming "more like the Savior?" The only way to grow more like Jesus (synonymous with progressive sanctification) is by daily intake of the pure milk of the Word (NOT ADDITIVES, NO DILUTION, NOT DEVOTIONALS, COMMENTARIES, BOOKS ABOUT THEOLOGY BUT THE **PURE WORD!**) that by it you may grow in respect to salvation (progressive sanctification) (1 Pe 1:2+, cf Mt 4:4+, Lk 4:4+) And by the way, if you find you are not longing like a newborn babe for the pure milk, you need to perform a serious, sober minded

personal inventory for things that are impeding your intake. And Peter just happens to have given us a list by which we can perform (under grace) a self-evaluation for he writes "Therefore, putting aside (THROWING OFF LIKE ONE WOULD ODORIFEROUS GARMENTS!) all (HOW MUCH?) malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, (1 Peter 2:1+) In short GROW-THROW-GO -- if you want to GROW, you need to THROW (off sins), and GO (to pure milk)! There is simply NO OTHER WAY to grow spiritually, for as you take in the Word, the Spirit is transforming your inner being with the Word - "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed** (the "divine passive") into the same image (CHRIST) from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." (2 Cor 3:18+).

*The fact that John sends to Jesus  
for an answer proves John's faith in Jesus.*

**R C H Lenski** - The fact that John sends to Jesus for an answer proves John's faith in Jesus. This answers those who think that John had lost confidence in Jesus and doubted as some moderns doubt—in disbelief. In that case John would not have directed his question to Jesus, nor would Jesus have sent an answer, and least of all the answer he did send. John's question was prompted by a difficulty that his faith encountered. God had pointed out to him that Jesus was the Messiah, John 1:33, 34. Jesus, then, was to do all the great Messianic works, both those of grace (Jn 3:11) and those of judgment (Jn 3:12); compare Luke 3:3–6 regarding the grace, and Lk 3:9 regarding the judgment. Thus John believed, preached, expected. But as Jesus carried on his work, it seemed to be nothing but grace without one single act of judgment. This is what perplexed the Baptist "when he heard in the prison the works of the Christ." Where were the works of judgment, the swinging of the fan, the crashing blows of the ax? They were not being done. How, then, was this to be explained? Would another One follow, another who would perform these works of judgment? For we must remember that throughout the prophecies, just as in the Baptist's proclamation concerning Jesus, one feature is not revealed by God: the interval of time between the first coming with grace and mercy and the second coming with judgment. (Borrow [The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel](#) page 426)

**COMMENT:** One can begin to understand John's confusion by examining the prophecy in Isaiah 61:2a which predicted **the favorable year of the Lord** (First Coming) and Isaiah 61:2b which predicted **the day of vengeance of our God** (Second Coming) depicted in the schematic below. John was the greatest of all the prophets (Mt 11:11) but he, like all of the OT prophets, failed to see this TIME GAP between the First and Second Comings of Messiah and apparently could not understand why Jesus was demonstrating no vengeance. (See more discussion of Time Gap)



### TIME GAP BETWEEN FIRST COMING AND SECOND COMING

**D A Carson** agrees that "Jesus was preaching in veiled fulfillment terms and bringing much blessing but no real judgment (cf. Dunn, Jesus, pp. 55–62), and as a result the Baptist was having second thoughts." (Borrow [Expositor's Bible Commentary](#) page 54)

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** on Mt 11:2-3 - Here we begin quite another story. The first verse ought to have gone with the preceding chapter, to which it belongs. John was in prison: he did not make a good caged bird — he of the wilderness and the river — and his faith began to flag. So some think. Was it so? Or was this embassy sent to our Lord for the sake of John's disciples? Were they wavering so much that John could not reassure them without the aid of Jesus? Or was it that John would intimate to our Lord that there were doubts abroad which would be met by a further proclamation of his mission? Was this all that John now thought himself able to do — namely, to call upon the Lord to state his claims in the most decisive manner? Did John resolve to draw from our Lord a very clear statement, that his disciples might thus be readily transferred to Jesus? The question as to our Lord's having a mission was surely not for John's sake: he knew full well that Jesus was the Son of God. But when he heard of all that Jesus did, he may have wondered that he himself was left in prison, and he may have thought that

possibly another was yet to come before all things could be rectified. Dark thoughts may come to the bravest when pent up in a narrow cell. It was well that John's question was put, that it might receive a distinct reply; reassuring for himself, and instructive for us.

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*Even a mature believer can be confused  
by the outworking of God's plan.*

**Michael Andrus** - Have there been times when your world seemed to be crashing down on you, and God was silent? Perhaps a loved one dies, or you lose your job, or one of your children is stretching you to the breaking point, or your health is threatened, or your spouse tells you he or she doesn't love you anymore. And some of you have had all those things happen to you in a relatively short period of time. Even if you're not personally facing tragedies like this, you have close friends who are, plus you see all around you war, racism, immorality, homelessness, drugs, crime, corruption, abortion, child abuse, terrorism, AIDS, etc. And you are tempted to wonder, "Where is God in all this?" Our Scripture text today tells the story of a great man of God who struggled with his faith because it seemed God was sitting on his hands while he rotted in prison.

Let's allow **Max Lucado** to tell us (See his article entitled "Dungeon of Doubt" - [Max Lucado - In the Eye of the Storm](#)), as only he can, what John was doing in prison, based on the account found in Matthew 14:1-12.....

"He was a child of the desert. Leathery face. Tanned skin. Clothing of animal skins. What he owned fit in a pouch. His walls were the mountains and his ceiling the stars.

But not anymore. His frontier is walled out, his horizon hidden. The stars are memories. The fresh air is all but forgotten. And the stench of the dungeon relentlessly reminds the child of the desert that he is now a captive of the king.

In anyone's book, John the Baptist deserves better treatment than this. After all, isn't he the forerunner of the Christ? Isn't he a relative of the Messiah? At the very least, isn't his the courageous voice of repentance?

John's problems began when he called a king on the carpet. On a trip to Rome, King Herod succumbed to the enticements of his brother's wife, Herodias. Deciding Herodias was better off married to him, Herod divorced his wife and brought his sister-in-law home. The gossip columnists were fascinated, but John the Baptist was infuriated. He pounced on Herod like a desert scorpion, denouncing the marriage for what it was – adultery.

Herod might have let him get away with it. But not Herodias. This steamy seductress wasn't about to have her social climbing exposed. She told Herod to have John pulled off the speaking circuit and thrown into the dungeon. Herod hemmed and hawed until she whispered and wooed. Then Herod gave in.

But that wasn't enough for this mistress. She had her daughter strut before the king and his generals at a stag party. Herod, who was as easily duped as he was aroused, promised to do anything for the pretty young thing in the G-string.

"Anything?"

"You name it," he drooled.

She conferred with her mother, who was waiting in the wings, then returned with her request.

"I want John the Baptist."

"You want a date with the prophet?"

"I want his head," replied the dancer. And then, reassured by a nod from her mother, she added, "On a silver platter, if you don't mind."

Herod looked at the faces around him. He knew it wasn't fair, but he also knew everyone was looking at him. And he had promised "anything." Though he personally had nothing against the country preacher, he valued the opinion polls much more than he valued John's life. After all, what's more important – to save face or to save the neck of an eccentric prophet?

The story reeks with inequity. John dies because Herod lusts. The good is murdered while the bad smirks. A man of God is killed while a man of passion is winking at his niece. Is this how God rewards his anointed? Is this how he honors his faithful? Is this how God crowns his chosen? With a dark dungeon and a shiny blade?" (Matthew 11:1-19, 14:1-12 [When God Sits on His Hands](#))

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**Josephus XVIII - 2.** Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God: and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the baptist. For Herod slew him [About Feb. A.D. 32.]; who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue; both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God; and so to

come to baptism. For that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away, [or the remission] of some sins [only,] but for the purification of the body: supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Now when [many] others came in crowds about him; for they were very greatly moved [or pleased] by hearing his words; Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise rebellion: (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise:) thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause; and not bring himself into difficulties by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it would be too late. **Accordingly he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus; the castle I before mentioned; and was there put to death.** Now the Jews had an opinion, that the destruction of this army was sent as a punishment upon Herod; and a mark of God's displeasure to him.

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## JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS - Croft Pentz

Matthew 11:1–19

### I. Curious people—vv. 1–3

A. Work of Christ—v. 1. He commanded the disciples to teach and preach in other lands.

B. Wonder of John—vv. 2–3. John questioned whether Christ was the promised Messiah. Man need not wonder if Christ is the Messiah, for we have the complete Old Testament, which tells of the coming Messiah. It has already been proven that Christ is the Messiah, so unbelievers can only attempt to prove that He is not.

### II. Complete power—4–6

A. Command—v. 4. "Go and see for yourself." In other words, don't depend on others to make your decisions.

B. Completeness—v. 5.

1. Healing. He healed all sickness and disease.
2. Life. The dead were raised and given life.
3. Gospel. The gospel was preached to the poor.

C. Consecration—v. 6. Those not ashamed of Christ were blessed.

### III. Consecrated prophet—vv. 7–14

A. Seeking—vv. 7–10. Jesus asked the people what they were looking for. John the Baptist was more than a prophet. Verse 10 is a quote of Malachi 3:1.

B. Servant—v. 11. John the Baptist was chosen as God's servant. John used no fancy words, wore no fancy clothes and preached without a church building. Yet he was one of the greatest ministers of all time.

C. Strength—v. 12. The world tries to destroy the work of God, but strong Christians can destroy the forces of evil and inherit the kingdom of God.

D. Simplicity—vv. 13–15. John was the Elias (Elijah) of the New Testament. All Christians can be used of God in doing His work. He can provide talent for those who offer Him consecration and dedication.

### IV. Childish people—vv. 16–17

A. Lack of response—vv. 16–17. People did not respond to the messages of Christ. Jesus was the greatest teacher that ever lived, yet the people refused to accept His Word.

B. Lack of respect—v. 18. Though John was a holy man sent from God, the people did not respect him. Christians should always respect their pastor as he is also sent by God.

C. Lack of reverence—v. 19. Jesus, the Son of God came and was rejected (John 1:11).

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**Phil Newton** has an excellent sermon on doubt ([Matthew 11:1-6 Settling Doubts](#))

### I. Encroaching clouds of doubt

A couple of weeks ago I was enjoying a beautiful day working in my yard. The sky was blue, the breeze slightly cool for a summer day, when all of a sudden, without warning, an ominous cloud moved overhead. I made it inside just in time before the storm broke loose. Doubt in the life of the believer is often just like that. As an Elijah, you might be experiencing the grandest peaks in your walk with the Lord when suddenly, without warning, clouds of doubt encroach upon your life. Dark, foreboding clouds, full of terrifying storms rain doubt upon the peaceful tranquility of your mind.

Few among us have avoided those clouds. They come at the most inopportune times. And they assault even the most faithful saints. As fiery darts from the enemy, doubt strikes the mind and emotions to sink our enthusiasm for Christ and the gospel, and to dampen our assurance of being in Christ. "The Christian life includes ongoing tension between assurance and doubt, notwithstanding that faith's victory is sure," writes Joel Beeke [[The Quest for Full Assurance](#)]. Doubt seems to be a pesky

companion, or at times, a vicious adversary. Yet, "God uses conflicts, doubts, and trials to mature the believer in faith" [Beeke, 151]. So how does doubt strike the believer?

## 1. Occasions of doubt

Don Whitney has written, "You are not abnormal if you have occasional doubts about whether you are a Christian." He goes on to explain, "Experiencing chronic doubts about salvation is unusual... Occasional doubts - even horrifying doubts - are one thing, but doubts that persist in the face of every biblical remedy demand careful attention" [20, 24]. Chronic doubts might indicate that the person is not a believer at all, and therefore must find refuge in the gospel alone. But our concern in this study of God's Word is with the occasional doubts, the kind that comes intermittently, though they may last for sustained periods until remedied.

Note that in our text, "**John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ,**" and thus "**sent word by his disciples and said to Him, 'Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?'**" What was happening in John's life for doubt to cloud his thinking? You will remember that he had testified clearly and strongly concerning Christ, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me'" (John 1:29-30). John testified of both the person of Christ as being eternal, and the redemptive work of Christ as being totally effective. He spoke clearly and faithfully about Jesus Christ. He understood the essential truths concerning Christ. But now, by reason of his circumstances, he struggled with doubt. I would identify this as a time of personal weakness in which doubt, like a leech in murky waters, attaches to the thinking of one enduring difficult times. John had no more public ministry. Christ had eclipsed him even as he had purposed (John 3:30). He went from a popular public figure - though a fearful one in many people's eyes - to an obscure prisoner. He suffered in the desert prison. He felt alienated from most everyone, and on top of it all, he knew that Herod's instability could mean greater suffering or death.

I do not think there is a suggestion at all that John doubted his calling and ministry. He knew that he was the forerunner of Messiah, but he also was affected by his own message, that the "winnowing fork" was in Messiah's hand to deal out judgment (Matt 3:12). He was not seeing it happen, so in the physical, mental, and emotional weakness of his desert imprisonment, he struggled with doubt.

This leads to another cause of doubting, confusion and misunderstanding. John thought that Messiah would do all of which he prophesied in a fell swoop. It was going to happen quickly, or so he thought. He was confused to a degree about the dynamics of Messiah's kingdom, rule, and judgment. He certainly understood what Christ would do but he did not fully grasp the divine timetable or the nature of Christ's rule. It left him confused, and confusion led to doubts. Some of us can identify with John. There are truths concerning Christ that we have not understood, and we're left doubting. Obadiah Sedgwick concurs that what he calls "imbecility of judgment about the essentials of salvation" (not a flattering word but very 17th century) is "the great spring of doubtings" [31]. Sometimes it is due to misunderstanding the doctrine of justification or the nature of repentance or the confusion about grace that leads to doubt. But when there is confusion and misunderstanding, it can be cleared away by truth.

Another cause of doubt is unconfessed sin in the believer's life. By this, I do not mean so much sin that is present that the believer is unaware, but more particularly, sins that the believer refuses to acknowledge and deal with. His fellowship with Christ has been so greatly hindered, and the Lord's presence withdrawn due to unconfessed and unrepentant sins that the Christian begins to doubt. Again, this is an area that can be cleared by the Christian humbling himself before the Lord, trusting in the sufficiency of Christ's death, and resting in the Lord's forgiveness.

Akin to this, doubt can be caused by disobedience. I do not think in the least that this was part of John's doubt but it can be part of ours, just as it was in Peter's life. When we know God's commands, and yet we selfishly choose to go our way and not His, we will likely be left with doubts about our assurance. And rightly so, for doubting our assurance is a divine means of curbing our bent to sin and returning us to fellowship and obedience with Him.

The bent of personality might also be a cause of doubt. Here we discover that those with a more melancholy personality with the accompanying tendency to be introspective and overly analytical may find clouds of doubt creeping into their lives. Many of the Psalms seem to reflect this. "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? ...O my God, my soul is in despair within me" (Ps 42:5-6). "I am benumbed and badly crushed; I groan because of the agitation of my heart... Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, do not be far from me!" (38:8, 21). "How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?" (Ps 13:1).

**ILLUSTRATION** Charles H. Spurgeon, the best-known preacher of the 19th century, faced times of melancholy despair. On one such occasion he was taking a holiday and slipped into a Methodist Church for Sunday worship. He said, "I felt at that time very weary, and very sad, and very heavy at heart; and I began to doubt in my own mind whether I really enjoyed the things which I preached to others. It seemed to be a dreadful thing for me to be only a waiter, and not a guest, at the gospel feast." The man conducting the service was an engineer, and rather than developing his own sermon, he had borrowed one of Spurgeon's. He did not know that the London pastor was in his service. As he preached, Spurgeon commented, "The tears flowed freely from my eyes; I

was moved to the deepest emotion by every sentence of the sermon, and I felt all my difficulty removed, for the gospel, I saw, was very dear to me, and had a wonderful effect upon my own heart." He later introduced himself to the shocked speaker, and told him that it was just the sermon that he needed to hear [C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography: The Full Years, vol 2, 365-366]. If someone like Spurgeon occasionally struggled with doubts due to his bent of personality, do not be surprised if that happens to you. Like Spurgeon, find your assurance once again in the gospel.

The final cause of doubt that I will mention - and certainly there are others - is perplexity in circumstances. That is where John found himself, perplexed in the circumstances of being imprisoned for a year. Satan tends to ride our circumstances as an opportunist, to cast doubt upon us of God's goodness, mercy, kindness, and compassion. It may be due to some personal loss or a family death or an illness or a reversal of good fortune or an ill-timed catastrophe that leaves the believer in perplexity over God's good hand. MacArthur rightly states, "Except for when we willingly continue in sin, we are never so vulnerable to doubting God's goodness and truth and believing Satan's lies as when we are suffering" [241]. Such doubts often cause us to question the Lord.

## 2. Questions in doubt

In John's case, he asks a question of Christ's identity, wanting affirmation that what he had preached and lived for was true, or otherwise, was someone else going to fulfill the Messiah's role? "**Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?**" The designation, "**Expected One**," was fairly common in John's day as a title for the Messiah, originating from Psalms 40:7 and Ps 118:26. It conveys the heart longings of faithful Jews for centuries, waiting for Messiah to come with all the blessings and judgments that were promised. 'Did I get the picture right concerning You? Are You the One that I've been describing?' John asks. "Or shall we look for someone else?" **Someone else** literally means, another of a different sort. Do we need to look for someone that is not like You? That was a serious question that probably pained John to ask.

*If you struggle with doubt, and you strain toward faith with your questions, follow John's lead. Go to Christ with your questions*

But doubts do leave questions. Unbelief already has its mind made up, and denies the truths concerning Christ. Doubt in the believer, on the other hand, "is straining toward faith but lacking in something. Often what is lacking is a more thorough understanding of the truth" [Whitney 21]. And so questions arise. Jesus Christ does not reject our questions. He welcomes them because He is the Truth. So if you struggle with doubt, and you strain toward faith with your questions, follow John's lead. Go to Christ with your questions.

## II. Dispelling clouds of doubt

This is such a practical step to take when dealing with doubts. On John's part, rather than souring deeper and deeper in doubt, he sent a small delegation to Christ to settle the issues that plagued his mind. He gives us a very simple, clear pattern for dispelling the clouds of doubt in our own lives.

### 1. Go to Christ

"Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to Him, **Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?**" Look at this, my doubting friend. John, though detained himself due to imprisonment, sent some of his disciples to Christ. They represented John. He knew that the answers to his questions and lingering doubts would not be found among the Jewish scholars of his day or among the Greek philosophers. He needed to hear from Christ. Is this not what anyone struggling with doubts needs as well?

I have often tried to help believers that struggle with doubts, and I'll continue to do so. Don Whitney's [How can I be sure I'm a Christian?](#) and Obadiah Sedgwick's [The Doubting Believer](#) continue to be excellent helps for doubting Christians. John MacArthur and John Piper both have wonderful material to help doubting believers. But with all such assistance, all that these sources can do is to point to the Source for dispelling the clouds of doubt - Jesus Christ. Christ did not reject John's messengers - He welcomed them. Luke even suggests that Jesus did some special works before the eyes of John's messengers just so that they would have more certainty of Him to pass along to John (Luke 7:21+). Go to Christ in prayer and in the Scriptures. Go to Christ in your meditations. Go to Christ in worship. Go to Christ, and find Him ready to dispel the clouds of doubt. But how are we to go to Him?

### RESOURCES FOR DOUBTING CHRISTIANS:

- Don Whitney - BORROW [How can I be sure I'm a Christian? : what the Bible says about assurance of salvation](#)
- Obadiah Sedgwick - PDF [The Doubting Believer](#)
- John MacArthur BORROW [Saved Without a Doubt - How to be Sure of Your Salvation](#)
- [Articles and sermons from John Piper and Desiringgod.org](#)

## 2. Look and listen

Notice the words of Christ for John and his disciples, **"Go and report to John what you hear and see."** Listen to the words of Christ. See the works of Christ. That was our Lord's prescription for times of doubt.

Listen to His teaching. Read again the words of our Lord as He taught His first disciples. Read them over and over. Read them consistently and attentively. Jot notes on your thoughts. Underline verses that especially speak to your need. Ponder His sermons and parables. Think upon His counsel with those desperate souls that came to Him. Listen with a view to understanding why He came into the world, how He lived each day, and how He faced distressing times. Consider the nature of His calling for Christian disciples. Think long and hard upon the passion narratives that describe the suffering and death of Christ, and His triumphant resurrection. Look at how He gave assurance to His disciples and followers that no man could pluck them out of His hands. Listen to the preaching and teaching of God's Word. Listen anew to the words of the great hymns that call upon us to look and listen - "when I survey the wondrous cross," my faith looks up to Thee," etc.

These disciples were John's eyes and ears, witnessing of Christ on his behalf, and then reporting back to John with all the enthusiasm of those seeing Christ as Lord. When you have trouble making your way to Christ, listen to those who have seen Him and heard Him themselves. Thank God that John had friends to give a report concerning Christ in time of need. You may find help in such friends yourself as you talk about Christ and listen to the testimony of those that have been in His presence.

**Look to Him.** Do not fall into the perilous trap of considering Christ in the abstract as though He was merely a philosophical or religious concept. Think upon Him. Look to Him. Notice that Jesus declared in fulfillment of Messianic prophecy, "The blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." (Mt 11:5) That is the way that Isaiah described the Expected One (Isa 61:1-3+). Rejoice in what Christ has done (Isa 61:10). Talk to Him and cry out to Him in your need. Meditate upon His works of mercy and redemption, and then talk with Him about these things. Approach Him as Your great High Priest, who is interceding for you in your need. Ask Him for the Holy Spirit's witness in your life as He promised. Ask for the Spirit to teach you the Word of God and to bring things to your remembrance concerning Christ and His work. Confess your sins before Him. Confess His faithfulness and compassion. Look to His promises made for you in the Word.

*Assurance of salvation is not a decision that we make - it is a gift from the Lord of our salvation as we listen to Him and look to Him*

Assurance of salvation is not a decision that we make - it is a gift from the Lord of our salvation as we listen to Him and look to Him. Assurance is ongoing, intended to strengthen us in times of weakness and trial so that we might persevere in the faith. Christ alone can dispel the clouds of doubt, so run to Him.

## III. Avoiding clouds of doubt

Jesus did not deliver John from the circumstances of imprisonment, the very root that may have turned him to doubts. But the words of Christ passed along now through John's disciples, brought comfort to this believer in the hour of trial. He was soon beheaded. But I believe we can rest assured that the cloud was dispelled and John rejoiced in Christ the Lord.

Our Lord gives, what I recall Vance Havner calling, "[The forgotten beatitude](#)." "And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me." What did He mean by this forgotten beatitude?

### 1. Stumbling over blessing

To "**take offense**" at Christ is to stumble over the revelation we have of Him in the Word. Do Christ and His cross offend me? That is the question we must ask ourselves for that helps us to discern the difference between doubt and unbelief. Doubt does not satisfactorily understand the work of Christ on the cross. Unbelief scorns what Christ has done, and denies its effectiveness and necessity.

Some people doubt as Christians. Others within Christian influence stumble over Christ because they are not Christians. To them, the cross is a scandal, a barbaric and unnecessary discussion. When we begin to stumble over Christ, I would suggest to you that we do not doubt -- we are instead living in unbelief. To stumble over the Incarnation or His sinless life or His perfect obedience or His co-equality with the Godhead or His eternality is to deny the Person of Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures. To stumble over the necessity of the cross or Christ bearing our sins before God's judgment or the reality of His resurrection or Christ as the only Savior for sinners or the effectiveness of Christ as High Priest or the certain of Christ's return is to scorn the gospel. This kind of stumbling moves away from Christ. It may be someone that was brought up in church under the teaching of God's Word, but due to stumbling over Christ's person or work, he gradually moves into deeper and deeper unbelief.

The denuded Christianity of some who deny the essence of Christ's person and work is in fact, no true Christianity at all. Many accept some of the principles of Christ's teaching while rejecting the biblical revelation of Christ's person and work. They have stumbled over the blessing of Christ and His gospel. Does that describe you? Are any among us slowly moving away from Christ because we find what the Bible teaches concerning Him to be offensive?

## 2. Blessing over doubt

Christ promises blessing or genuine happiness for those not taking offense at Him. "Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me." Richly happy, fulfilled, and satisfied are those that do not find Christ and His work to be a point of stumbling.

### Conclusion

Do you wrestle with doubts this morning? Then go to Christ. Listen to His teaching. Look at His character, promises, and work. Think longingly upon Him. Call upon Him. Bring your questions before Him and His Word. Plead for His Spirit to open your eyes to see the cause of your doubts and then apply His gracious remedy to your own need. Find blessing over doubt by taking refuge in Him.

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Here is an interesting analysis of Matthew 11 and Matthew 12 "analysis is suggested in general terms by Hagner (1993:298) and addressed in specifics by Davies and Allison (1991:233–234). This approach identifies three sets or collections of passages, each of which contains three elements, the first two stressing unbelief and the third belief:

- I. First collection (11:2–30)
  1. Unbelief: John the Baptist (11:2–19)
  2. Unbelief: the towns of Galilee (11:20–24)
  3. Belief: "Come unto me" (11:25–30)
- II. Second collection (12:1–21)
  1. Unbelief: Sabbath controversy (12:1–8)
  2. Unbelief: Sabbath controversy (12:9–14)
  3. Belief: "the hope of the Gentiles" (12:15–21)
- III. Third collection (12:22–50)
  1. Unbelief: the unforgivable sin (12:22–37)
  2. Unbelief: an evil generation (12:38–45)
  3. Belief: Jesus' true family (12:46–50)

(See [Matthew, Mark - Page 159](#))

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**Halley's Bible Handbook (online)** on John's doubting - At the height of John's popularity, he baptized Jesus and proclaimed Him to be the Messiah. Then, his mission accomplished, he passed off the stage. He had roused the nation and had presented the Son of God. His work was done. However, he continued preaching and baptizing for a few months, moving northward to Aenon (John 3:23) About a year after he baptized Jesus, John was imprisoned by Herod to satisfy the whim of a wicked woman (Matthew 14:1–5). This was at the close of Jesus' early Judean ministry (Matthew 4:12; John 3:22; 4:35)...As he mused behind dungeon walls, he was puzzled. Jesus was not doing what he thought the Messiah would do. John evidently shared the popular notion of a political messianic kingdom. God did not reveal to him everything about the nature of His kingdom. Even the Twelve were slow to grasp what the kingdom was all about. (See on Matthew 10.) Assuming that John began his ministry shortly before he baptized Jesus, it lasted about a year and a half. Thirty years in seclusion, 1½ years of public preaching, a year and 4 months in prison—and then the final curtain. This is the resume of the man who ushered in the Savior of the world, and of whom Jesus said there had not been born anyone greater (Matthew 11:11)...John was beheaded at about the time of the second Passover (Matthew 14:12–13; John 6:4).

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**Myron Augsburger on John the Baptist** - A biographical message on John should include the following: (1) John had a proper understanding of himself, John 1:19–23. (2) John had a clear sense of mission; in John 3:30 he said of Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (3) John had a spiritual certainty that radiated, John 5:31–33; as William James said, "Lives based on having are less free than lives based on doing or on being." (4) John had a reputation for righteousness, Mark 6:20, for he was heard and feared by Herod. (5) John was an effective witness to the truth, John 10:41, for the people said, "All the things that John spoke about this Man were true." It was said by John Wesley, "Get on fire and they'll come and watch you burn." (See [The Preacher's Commentary - Vol. 24: Matthew](#))

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### Vance Havner - Get Your Head Up!

It is a day of drooping heads and discouraged hearts. Apart from divine intervention, the world situation is absolutely hopeless. No

one knows what to do. Even Christians are infected with the mood. "Why doesn't God do something? There are more heathen than ever. The gospel is not winning the world. It is going to the Communists." Even stout hearts fail for fear and many, like John the Baptist in prison, feel like asking our Lord: "**Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?**" (Matthew 11:3).

We ought to get our heads up. Our Lord said: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). But have we not seen all these signs before? Yes, many of them separately and at different times, but never have they all converged simultaneously as now. Our Lord also said: "So also when you see these signs all taken together coming to pass, you may know of a surety that He is near, at the very doors" (Matthew 24:33, amplified new testament).

The frightening headlines today mean one thing to this poor world and something entirely different to the Christian. He does not rejoice in the world's misery but he lifts up his head because he knows it means the redemption of this earth, racked with all the ravages of sin. It means that our bodies, with all their aches and pains, will soon be exchanged for new bodies like our Lord's. It means the sons of God will soon come into their own. Get your head up, brother! The wise men of this world shake their heads in perplexity, but the humblest Christian with a dollar Bible knows what time it is. He is not too excited over Communism and astronauts and nuclear war and the population explosion and all the passing fads that come and go. He knows that they are the dying gasps of an expiring age and that, when the kingdoms of this world have knocked each other out, the Lord will set up His rule. For that, the Christian lives every moment. He is not looking for something to happen; he is looking for Someone to come.

We have another reason for getting our heads up. Our Lord said: "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35). It is not enough to watch the skies for His return. We have work to do. The returning Lord is also the reaping Lord and there are souls to be won. All around us are men and women who are strangers to the grace of God. There is an academic interest in prophecy that glories in our coming redemption but does nothing about the redemption of men and women today. We still have time to snatch some brands from the burning. The night has not yet come when no man can work. "Soon will the season of rescue be o'er" when men will say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20).

Get your head up! Communism, cocky and confident, has its head up, drunk with the wine of success and sure that it can conquer the world. The church is too often behind closed doors in fear. I am grieved to read and hear so much pessimism from Christian sources, so much hand-wringing among Christian leaders, as though our cause were doomed. Our Lord is doing what He came to do, but we are not doing what we were saved to do. We are not being conformed to the image of God's Son and we are not making disciples. It is redemption time and reaping time! Heads up to the challenge of the hour and the call of the harvest! "... it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans 13:11).

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### It's Okay To Ask

Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, . . . the poor have the gospel preached to them. —Luke 7:22

It's perfectly natural for fear and doubt to creep into our minds at times. "What if heaven isn't real after all?" "Is Jesus the only way to God?" "Will it matter in the end how I lived my life?" Questions like these should not be given quick or trite responses.

John the Baptist, whom Jesus called the greatest of the prophets (Luke 7:28), had questions shortly before his execution (v.19). He wanted to know for sure that Jesus was the Messiah and that his own ministry had therefore been valid.

Jesus' response is a comforting model for us to use. Instead of discounting the doubt or criticizing John, Jesus pointed to the miracles He was doing. As eyewitnesses, John's disciples could return with vivid assurances for their mentor. But He did more—He used words and phrases (v.22) drawn from Isaiah's prophecies of the coming Messiah (Isa. 35:4-6; 61:1), which were certain to be familiar to John.

Then, turning to the crowd, Jesus praised John (Luke 7:24-28), removing any doubt that He was offended by John's need for reassurance after all he had seen (Matt. 3:13-17).

Questioning and doubting, both understandable human responses, are opportunities to remind, reassure, and comfort those who are shaken by uncertainty. By Randy Kilgore [Used by permission from Our Daily Bread](#)

When my poor soul in doubt is cast  
And darkness hides the Savior's face,  
His love and truth still hold me fast  
For He will keep me by His grace.  
—D. De Haan

Reassurance comes as we doubt our doubts and believe our beliefs.

### Matthew 11:3 and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?"

NET Matthew 11:3 "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"

GNT Matthew 11:3 ε πεν α τ , Σ ε ρ χ μενος τερων προσδοκ μεν;

NLT Matthew 11:3 "Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?"

KJV Matthew 11:3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

ESV Matthew 11:3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

NIV Matthew 11:3 to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

ASV Matthew 11:3 and said unto him, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?

CSB Matthew 11:3 and asked Him, "Are You the One who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

NKJ Matthew 11:3 and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

NRS Matthew 11:3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?"

YLT Matthew 11:3 said to him, 'Art thou He who is coming, or for another do we look?'

NAB Matthew 11:3 with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"

NJB Matthew 11:3 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?'

GWN Matthew 11:3 to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who is coming, or should we look for someone else?"

BBE Matthew 11:3 To say to him, Are you he who is to come, or are we waiting for another?

- **Are You** - Mt 2:2-6 Ge 3:15 12:3 49:10 Nu 24:17 De 18:15-18 Ps 2:6-12 Ps 110:1-5 Isa 7:14 9:6,7 Jer 23:5,6 Eze 34:23,24 Da 9:24-26 Ho 3:5 Joe 2:28-32 Am 9:11,12 Ob 1:21 Mic 5:2 Zep 3:14-17 Hag 2:7 Zec 9:9 Mal 3:1 4:2 Joh 4:21 7:31,41,42
- **the Expected One** - Mt 21:5,9 Mk 11:9 Lu 19:38 Joh 16:14 12:13 Heb 10:37
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Luke 7:20+ When the men came to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, 'Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?'"

Luke 24:11+ (APOSTLES DOUBTED) But these words (THAT HE WAS NOT IN THE TOMB) appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them.

Isaiah 61:1-2+ The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives, And freedom to prisoners; 2 To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,

Isaiah 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.

### ARE YOU THE EXPECTED ONE?

**Allen** prefaces John's comments writing "At first glance, it seems like a very bad piece of P.R. to have in the Bible! After all, it tells us of how the man who was appointed by God to be the greatest advocate for Jesus in His earthly ministry - a man who, in fact, had been prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures as the 'forerunner' and 'herald' of our Lord's earthly ministry - expressed a growing sense of disappointment in Him. And yet, the Lord took his doubts seriously; and answered them. And what the Lord told Him in this passage gives encouragement to the rest of us who have those times of doubt - those times when Jesus seems to disappoint us." ([Gregg Allen](#))

Recall that John had said many things about Jesus as recorded in (cf Mt 3:11). And yet Jesus had not fulfilled John's expectations.

John had introduced Jesus as the Messiah. John had Denounced sinners but Jesus Dined with them. John expected Jesus to be riding into Israel on a white horse. Instead, it seemed as if He were strolling across the land with a first-aid kit. John remembered what Isaiah said the Messiah would do as in Isaiah 61:1 which said He would "**proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners.**" And yet John, a captive and a prisoner, had not been set free.

[ESV Study Bible page 1832](#) (borrow) - John is probably concerned because his present imprisonment does not match his understanding of the Coming One's arrival, which was to bring blessing on those who repented and judgment on those who did not.

**William Hendriksen** says that "As John saw it, the gracious words that fell from the lips of the Savior and the miracles of mercy He performed did not harmonize with the manner in which He, the Baptist, had pictured Him before the public. He had presented Him as One who had come to punish and destroy (Mt. 3:7, 10; Lk 3:7, 9)...What Christ's herald missed, however, was this: he failed to discern that this prophecy of doom would go into fulfillment not now but at Christ's second coming. He had not seen the present and the future in true perspective." ([New Testament Commentary - Page 483](#))

**Lowell Johnson** adds "Jesus is going to send John a message: "Focus on what I am doing; not on what I'm not doing. When the time is right, I'll open prison doors."

**And said to Him, "Are You the Expected One([erchomai](#) present tense), or shall we look for someone else ([heteros](#))?"** - **Expected One** (Literally "the Coming One") is clearly a designation of the Messiah and is based on Ps 40:7 ("Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me.") and Ps 118:26 (Blessed is **the One who comes** in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD). Ps 118:26 in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates "one who comes" with  $\rho\chi\ \mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$  ("the coming one") which is identical to the Greek text in Mt 11:3 for "Expected One" (  $\rho\chi\ \mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ ). The phrase **someone else** ([heteros](#)) is literally another of a different sort. In other words John is asking "Do we need to look for someone that is not like You?"

**THOUGHT** - This Name for the Messiah begs an important question - Are you expecting Him? Are you afraid of where you might end up (heaven or hell) if He returned today (See Romans Road to Salvation) Are you living (thoughts, words, deeds, daily choices) in such a way that others could tell you are expecting Him? Remember John's loving warning " Now, little children, **abide** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) in Him (See "in" = locative of sphere, see In Christ), so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming." (1 John 2:28+) In summary, are you living with a Maranatha Mindset? Remember three facts - (1) He promised to return, (2) He is one day closer to His return and (3) His return is always imminent! (See also Redeem the Time)

*Virtually all the gospel references to doubt pertain to believers rather than to unbelievers*

**John MacArthur** comments "In the case of John the Baptist, and of countless believers since his time, doubt might better be described as perplexity or confusion. The perplexity dealt with in these verses is the perplexity of a believer, a true child of God and citizen of His kingdom. John was not questioning the truthfulness of God's Word as revealed in the Old Testament or as revealed to him at the baptism of Jesus. He was rather uncertain about his understanding of those truths. Virtually all the gospel references to doubt pertain to believers rather than to unbelievers; and the kind of questioning John the Baptist experienced concerning Jesus' identity can only occur in the life of a believer. In that transitional time, before the written revelation of the New Testament, there were many things that seemed unclear and needed explanation and confirmation." (see [Matthew Commentary - Page 238](#))

**His doubt was not unbelief.** *Unbelief rejects the revelation of Christ, refuses to believe that He is both God and man, and does not accept the finality and sufficiency of the work of Christ on the cross and in the resurrection.*

**Phil Newton** -Many commentators refuse to intimate doubt on John's part. They suggest that his questions were for the sake of his disciples. Others admit that John was despondent, and perhaps even depressed from the situation he faced, but stop short of declaring doubt. We must accept the plain reading of the text. John heard of what Christ was doing, and before he faced the executioner's axe he wanted to allay any lingering doubts about the Messiah. His doubt was not unbelief. Unbelief rejects the revelation of Christ, refuses to believe that He is both God and man, and does not accept the finality and sufficiency of the work of Christ on the cross and in the resurrection. "*Unbelief is unambiguous in its denial of certain things and clear about where it stands*" writes **Don Whitney** [[BORROW How can I be sure I'm a Christian? : what the Bible says about assurance of salvation](#) PAGE 20]. But doubt is different. It often comes out of the blue, maybe even after wonderful times of Christian growth. Doubt piggybacks the despondencies of life, and even the misunderstandings of Scripture. As **John MacArthur** (ED: SEE HIS NOTE ABOVE) points out, "*Virtually all the gospel references to doubt pertain to believers rather than to unbelievers; and the kind of questioning John the Baptist experienced concerning Jesus' identity can only occur in the life of a believer*" [see [Matthew Commentary - Page 238](#)]. One of the Puritan divines, **Obadiah Sedgwick**, put it quaintly, "*I had almost said... there is none had faith, but has found his doubtings*"

[SEE PDF [The Doubting Believer](#), 9]. ([Matthew 11:1-6 Settling Doubts](#))

**Newton** goes on to add "Look at this, my doubting friend. John, though detained himself due to imprisonment, sent some of his disciples to Christ. They represented John. He knew that the answers to his questions and lingering doubts would not be found among the Jewish scholars of his day or among the Greek philosophers. He needed to hear from Christ. Is this not what anyone struggling with doubts needs as well? ([Matthew 11:1-6 Settling Doubts](#))

*"The Christians chief occupational hazards are depression and discouragement."*

--John Stott

**Louis Barbieri** proposes that "John must have thought, If I am Messiah's forerunner and Jesus is the Messiah, why am I in prison? John needed reassurance and clarification, for he had expected the Messiah to overcome wickedness, judge sin, and bring in His kingdom." (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Gospels](#))

We need to remember that not only John the Baptist, the herald of Christ had doubts, but so did the men who were closest to Him, in His presence, witnessing His miracles and wonderful teaching. Here are some examples...

(Mt 8:26) (See context Mt 8:24) He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.

(Mt 14:31) Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him (PETER - see Mt 14:29, 30), and said to him, "**You of little faith, why did you doubt?**"

(Mt 21:21) And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, **if you have faith and do not doubt**, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen.

(Mt 28:17) (EVEN POST-RESURRECTION) When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but **some were doubtful**.

(Mk 11:23) "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and **does not doubt in his heart**, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him.

(Mk 16:11) When they (HIS OWN DISCIPLES TO WHOM HE TAUGHT HE WOULD RISE FROM THE DEAD IN 3 DAYS!) heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, **they refused to believe it**.

(Lk 12:28+) "But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? **You men of little faith!**

**John MacArthur** on John's question which expresses doubt - Honest doubt, on the other hand, is not a bad starting point, but it is a bad finishing point. Even the noblest of saints, such as Abraham (Gen. 17:17), Sarah (Gen. 18:12), Moses (Ex. 3:10-15), Gideon (Judg. 6:13-23, 36-40), Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-14), and the apostles (Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 28:17; Luke 12:28; 24:38; John 20:24-25) had their moments of doubt. The capacity to doubt is an aspect of the rationality that is part of the image of God in man. A healthy skepticism, being able to discern truth from error, is critically important. For example, the Bible commends the noble-minded Bereans, who "received the word" preached by Paul and Silas "with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Even the greatest man who ever lived up to his time (Matt. 11:11), John the Baptist, struggled with doubt. He had believed that Jesus was the Messiah. He had witnessed the testimony to His identity by the Father and the Spirit when he baptized Jesus. John had declared that Jesus was "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29), and testified concerning His identity to the Jewish leaders (vv. 26-27). But despite his powerful witness to Jesus as the Messiah, doubts had arisen in John's mind regarding His identity. This passage gives the reasons for John's doubt, and Jesus' response to that doubt. (See [MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**Myron Augsburger** - The doubt may not have been about our Lord's mission but about His way of manifesting the mission. What kind of Messiah is He since He has not toppled the powers of the political and religious orders? The idea of the [Suffering Servant](#) was not primary in John's perception. But it may be that John's intent in his question was to press Jesus to be more open about His messiahship. (See [The Preacher's Commentary - Vol. 24: Matthew](#)) (See also the Discovery House booklet on [The Jewish Tradition Of Two Messiahs](#))

**Adrian Rogers** - I'm going to tell you something about John—and this I appreciate about John: John had some doubts, but they were honest doubts, and he took them to Jesus. And that's what you need to do with your doubts: If it's an honest doubt, bring it to Jesus. And I'll tell you about Jesus, Jesus will give you an honest answer. ([Are you Angry With God? page 819](#))

**David Abernathy** summarizes the thoughts of different commentators on what John's question indicates - John's confidence had

been shaken by the delay of God's judgment on sin and by John's own imprisonment [BECNT - David Turner, CC - J. Gibbs, Lns - Lenski, NAC - C. Blomberg, NTC, NIBC - R Mounce, NICNT - R T France, WBC - D. Hagner], as well as by the growing opposition to Jesus [BECNT, NICNT, WBC]. The use of *ἄλλος* 'another' ([heteros](#)) may mean that John is wondering if he should be expecting a different kind of Messiah, so it was really a question about what kind of Messiah Jesus was [BECNT, NIBC]. John was expecting an eschatological judge and deliverer [NIGTC-John Nolland]. John expected Jesus to bring judgment but Jesus didn't do that [Lns, PNTC-Leon Morris], and moreover, Jesus abstained from religious practices like fasting [PNTC]. ([An Exegetical Summary of Matthew 1-16](#))

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Charles Wesley's great hymn has a description similar to "the Expected One"...

**[Come, thou long expected Jesus.](#)**

Born to set thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us;  
Let us find our rest in Thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear Desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,  
Born a child and yet a King.  
Born to reign in us forever,  
Now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By Thine own eternal spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By Thine all sufficient merit,  
Raise us to thy Glorious throne.

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Midlife Questions - Midlife feels like an emotional blizzard. Some of the swirling, disorienting confusion in your mind may be created by questions like:

- Am I stuck here for the "rest of my life"?
- Is this how it feels to get "old"
- Is anything worth it?
- Will I ever drive a race car, like I've always wanted?
- Why can't you understand me? Why can't I understand myself?
- Will I ever get the promotion? Do I even really want it?
- Where has all of my former confidence gone?
- When I'm old, will I become just like my mother/father?
- Why does God feel so distant, so uncaring, so silent?
- Are my kids ever going to get out of their troubles?
- Did I really marry the right person in the first place?
- Is this lump on my body cancer? Should I have it checked? Or am I just being paranoid?

See: Matthew 9:11, 14; Matthew 11:3; 18:1; 19:3; Mark 8:11; Luke 20:22; John 6:28

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**The Art of Overcoming Doubt**

When we are in doubt, God will never fail to give light when we have no other plan than to please him and to act in love for him. — Brother Lawrence in *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Christianity Today, Vol. 36, no. 7.

See: Judges 6:17; Matthew 11:3; John 20:25.

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The story is told (supposedly true) of a missionary who was sitting at her window when the mail arrived. She opened a letter and out fell a \$10 bill. As she read the note accompanying the money, the sight of a poorly dressed man on the street below caught her eye. Touched by the sight, she placed the \$10 bill in an envelope on which she wrote, "Don't Despair" and tossed it out the window. The man picked up the envelope, opened it, looked at the contents, smiled, tipped his hat, and went on his way.

The next day there was a knock at the missionary's door and when she opened it there stood the man she had given the money the day before. He was standing there holding out a handful of cash to her. "What's this," she asked. The man said, "Lady, it's your cut; 'Don't Despair' paid five to one at the races yesterday."

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**Lowell Johnson** -Let's be honest this morning. Have you ever been disappointed with Jesus? Have you ever felt as if Jesus had let you down? Have you ever expected something from Jesus and He didn't fulfill your expectations?

Several years ago, a lady who was angry with God came up to a young man in her work place. He was a young Christian and was on fire for the Lord and with a joyful spirit told his co-workers what Christ meant to him since he was recently saved. She said to him, "I was in that 'Christianity' stuff once, but I turned away from it, and I'll never return again. I want nothing to do with the kind of God you Christians worship. He let me down when I needed Him most."

The young Christian asked the lady what she meant. She told him of a sister that she loved very much. They were best friends. But she came home one day to the horrible sight of her sister in her room – hanging by the neck at the end of a rope. She said with bitter tones, "If there's a God in heaven, then why did He let my sister commit suicide? Why didn't He stop her? If that's your God, then I want nothing to do with Him."

The young man who told that story said that he wished he could make a happy ending to that story, but he couldn't, He was young in the faith and didn't know what to say to the poor woman. He said that if he could go back in time, he would listen to her pain and weep with her over her loss. He said, "I'd ask about her sister's life and let her share what she loved about her sister."

Then after a lot of tender and sympathetic listening to her pain, I would gently and lovingly let her know that she was mad at Jesus for failing to keep a promise that He never made. She had an unfair expectation of Jesus. She had expected Jesus to violate the will of her sister to prevent her from ever doing something harmful to herself. And so, when God didn't do what she expected that He had a duty to do, she became disappointed with Him, grew to resent Him, and finally came to reject Him.

That's just one incident, but I've met many people who became offended at Jesus because He didn't do what they EXPECTED Him to do.

Can I say with love; the problem is never with Jesus when He disappoints our expectations. The problem is always with us and our expectations. We expect Him to do something that He never said He would do.

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#### **QUESTION - [Did John the Baptist lose his faith in Jesus as the Messiah \(Matthew 11:3; Luke 7:19\)?](#)**

**ANSWER** - In John 1:29, John the Baptist declared of Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." On several occasions, John communicated his own unworthiness compared to Jesus (Matthew 3:14; John 1:27). And he famously said of the Lord, "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30). John the Baptist recognized Jesus to be the Messiah and had faith in Him.

However, later, as recorded in Matthew 11:3 and Luke 7:19, John the Baptist sent messengers to Jesus to ask Him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" What is happening here? Was John the Baptist's faith faltering? Was he doubting whether Jesus was truly the Messiah? Or is there another motivation for the question?

There are two main theories concerning John's question:

Theory Number 1: John the Baptist asked, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" because his current situation caused him to doubt. John the Baptist was in prison when he asked this question via messengers. He had been thrown in prison by Herod, a wicked ruler (Matthew 11:2; Luke 3:20). John had perhaps been confined for over a year by the time he asked his question. He likely knew that he would eventually be executed (and he was, shortly after he sent the message to Jesus; see Matthew 14:1–12). Also, Jesus was not being received as the Messiah by the majority of Israelites. In fact, Jesus was meeting strong resistance from the leaders of Israel: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Sanhedrin.

The Messiah was to inaugurate the kingdom of God, and no kingdom had yet appeared. John had told the crowds that the Messiah was coming soon, and "the ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10). John described the judgment the Messiah would bring: "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12). But now, in chapter 11, John is in prison. There was no ax, no winnowing fork, and no fire. Perhaps there was no Messiah. Given these circumstances, it is understandable that the faith of John the Baptist would waver. Why would the Deliverer of Israel not deliver His own messenger?

Theory Number 2: John the Baptist's question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" was asked for the sake of his disciples, to point them to Jesus. That is, it was John's disciples who were doubting, and John sent them to the Lord

to hear and see His answer for themselves. John's faith remained strong, but, knowing his time on earth was short, John sent his followers to the one they needed to follow from then on. He sent them to ask a question—a common teaching method—and the answer they received was faith-affirming. Ever since John had pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:29), he had been pointing people to Christ. He continued that mission even from prison.

Jesus' response involved a time of show and tell. "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor" (Matthew 11:4–5). All the works that John's disciples witnessed that day indicated that Jesus was the Chosen One. Isaiah 61:1 was being fulfilled before their very eyes: "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners."

Jesus then says to the disciples of John the Baptist, "Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me" (Matthew 11:6). Was this meant for John? Or was this meant for John's followers to whom Jesus was speaking? A case can be made either way.

John's disciples return to the prison to report on Jesus' words and actions. There, either John was strengthened and encouraged in his faith (theory 1), or seized the teachable moment to emphasize to his disciples that Jesus is the Messiah (theory 2).

After speaking to John's disciples, Jesus turns to the rest of the crowd and proceeds to praise John the Baptist: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.' Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:7–11; Luke 7:21–27).

Jesus does not rebuke John the Baptist for asking the question. If John had doubts, Jesus' response shows the caring, tender way He handles wavering faith (see Matthew 12:20). If John was simply teaching his disciples, Jesus provided incontrovertible evidence that faith in Him is not misplaced.

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**Steven Cole** believes John truly had doubts - At some time or another, every thinking person has wrestled with the problem of doubt. How can I be sure that Christianity is true? What if I have put all my hope in Christ, but I'm wrong? What if there is no heaven or hell? What if critics are right and the Bible is not the Word of God? Questions of this sort can nag at the heart of the most sincere believers.

Even unbelievers have their moments of doubt. C. S. Lewis, who was an atheist before he was saved, wrote (source unknown),

Just as the Christian has his moments when the clamor of this visible and audible world is so persistent, and the whisper of the spiritual world so faint that faith and reason can hardly stick to their guns, so, as I well remember, the atheist also has his moments of shuddering misgiving, of an all but irresistible suspicion that old tales may, after all, be true, that something or someone from outside may at any moment break into his neat, explicable, mechanical universe. Believe in God, and you will have to face hours when it seems obvious that this material world is the only reality; disbelieve in Him, and you must face hours when this material world seems to shout at you that it is *not* all. No conviction religious or irreligious will, of itself, end once and for all this fifth-columnist in the soul. Only the practice of faith resulting in the habit of faith will gradually do that.

We usually associate doubt with the infamous "Doubting Thomas," but at first, all the apostles doubted the reports of Christ's resurrection (Luke 24:11+). In the text before us, even the great forerunner, John the Baptist, was struggling with doubt as he languished in Herod's prison. Although some respectable commentators don't attribute doubt to the great man, I do not agree. I think that in spite of the fact that John was a great man of God, he was wrestling here with doubt. Through his honest question, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for someone else?" and through Jesus' reply to John's disciples and His comments to the crowd, we can learn some things about dealing with our doubt. (Sermon [Dealing With Doubt](#))

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#### Related Resources from Gotquestions.org:

- [What does the Bible say about doubt? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [If you doubt your salvation, does that mean you are not truly saved ...](#)
- [Doubting God - how can I overcome doubt in my relationship with God?](#)
- [How can I avoid being a doubting Thomas? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How can I overcome the fact that I am struggling with faith?](#)

- [How can I stop doubting Jesus? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the meaning of “I believe; help my unbelief” in Mark 9:24](#)
- [What if I don't feel saved? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How can I stop questioning my salvation? | GotQuestions.org](#)

#### Related Resources:

- Don Whitney - BORROW [How can I be sure I'm a Christian? : what the Bible says about assurance of salvation](#)
- Obadiah Sedgwick - PDF [The Doubting Believer](#) 175 page book
- John MacArthur BORROW [Saved Without a Doubt - How to be Sure of Your Salvation](#)
- [Articles and sermons from John Piper and Desiringgod.org](#)
- James Denney - [The Question of Doubt](#)

**MESSIAH THE EXPECTED ONE:** The anticipation of national deliverance through a Man anointed by God has been a theme of Judaism throughout the ages, even as many first century Jews were “eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel... looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem” (Lk 2:25,38). John the Baptist asked the question every pious Jew had been asking for centuries **“Are You the Expected One?”** (Mt 11:3, Lk 7:19-20), which is another way of asking “Jesus, Are You the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Deliverer?” The 12th article of the orthodox Jewish creed says “I believe with a perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and though He tarry, yet will I wait daily for His coming.” (Rambam) The first century Jews expected a conquering king who would free them from Rome, but instead this Messiah died a shameful death on a Roman cross. And so there was great disappointment because Jesus did not appear to be the Expected One. Have you ever been discouraged because someone in whom you placed your hope let you down?” Then you can identify with the two disciples who walked on the dusty road to Emmaus and were joined by a resurrected Stranger whose identity was veiled. Jesus saw they were “looking sad” for they “were hoping that (Jesus) was (the Messiah) Who was going to redeem Israel.” (Lk 24:17, 21) Had not Zacharias said that “the Lord God of Israel... (had) visited us and accomplished redemption (paid the ransom to effect deliverance) for His people?” (Lk 1:68) And yet Israel was still in Rome’s grip, a grip “as strong as iron!” (Da 2:40+) Against this backdrop of hopelessness and despair began the greatest Bible lesson ever taught, for the Teacher, the Messiah, “beginning with Moses (Pentateuch – Genesis to Deut) and all the Prophets explained to them what was said in ALL the (OT) Scriptures concerning Himself.” (Luke 24:27, cp Jn 5:39, Lk 16:29-31)

And so Messiah gave hope to these downcast disciples explaining that the woman’s SEED (Messiah) would have His heel bruised but would crush the head of the serpent (Ge 3:15 – the protoevangelium = the “first Gospel,” cp Heb 2:14-15+, Ro 16:20+). He explained that the prophet Micah had foretold of His birth from the clan of Judah in Bethlehem Ephrathah (Micah 5:2+). He explained that 500 years earlier Daniel had predicted the exact time of His arrival as “Messiah the Prince” (Da 9:25+) and that He would not conquer but “be cut off” (crucified) (Da 9:26+). In fact 60 major messianic prophecies with 270 ramifications (Jewish rabbis saw up to 456 messianic allusions!) were inspired by the Spirit so that there would be absolutely no doubt to OT readers that the Man Jesus was truly the long expected Messiah. Sadly, first century Jews were looking for Messiah to be a conquering King, not a suffering Servant and as a result most failed to recognize Him as God’s “Wonderful” One (Isaiah 9:6+) because they missed Isaiah’s later prediction that He would be “despised, forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief...stricken, smitten of God, afflicted...and pierced through for our transgressions...crushed for our iniquities...by His stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:3-5) In His first coming Messiah came as a King riding a donkey to conquer sin (Zech 9:9, Mt 21:4-5), but in His second coming He will return as King of kings riding on a white horse to conquer sinful men (Rev 19:11-16+)!

“Born Thy people to deliver,  
born a Child and yet a King;  
born to reign in us forever,  
now Thy gracious Kingdom bring.”

--C Wesley

In [New Evidence that Demands a Verdict](#) (free online scroll down to page 250) Josh McDowell has the following

**Objection:** Fulfilled Prophecy in Jesus Was Coincidental—an Accident - “Why, you could find some of these prophecies fulfilled in the deaths of Kennedy, King, Nasser, and other great figures,” replies the critic.

**Answer:** Yes, one could possibly find one or two prophecies fulfilled in the lives of other men, but not all sixty-one major prophecies! In fact, for years, if you could have found someone other than Jesus, living or dead, who fulfilled half the predictions concerning Messiah, as listed in Messiah in Both Testaments by Fred John Meldau, the Christian Victory Publishing Company of Denver offered to give you a thousand-dollar reward. There are a lot of men in the universities who could have used this extra cash!

H. Harold Hartzler, of the American Scientific Affiliation, Goshen College, in the foreword of Peter Stoner's book writes: "The manuscript for Science Speaks has been carefully reviewed by a committee of the American Scientific Affiliation members and by the Executive Council of the same group and has been found, in general, to be dependable and accurate in regard to the scientific material presented. The mathematical analysis included is based upon principles of probability which are thoroughly sound and Professor Stoner has applied these principles in a proper and convincing way" (Hartzler, "F," as cited in Stoner, SS).

The following probabilities are taken from **Stoner in Science Speaks** to show that coincidence is ruled out by the science of probability. Stoner says that by using the modern science of probability in reference to eight prophecies (1.—No. 10; 2.—No. 22; 3.—No. 27; 4.—No. 33 & 44; 5.—No. 34; 6.—No. 35 & 36; 7.—No. 39; 8.—No. 44 & 45 [crucified]),

"We find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 1017" (10 to the 17th power). That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000 (17 zeros after the one). In order to help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates it by supposing that "we take 1017 silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them according to their own wisdom. "Now these prophecies were either given by inspiration of God or the prophets just wrote them as they thought they should be. In such a case the prophets had just one chance in 1017 of having them come true in any man, but they all came true in Christ. This means that the fulfillment of these eight prophecies alone proves that God inspired the writing of those prophecies to a definiteness which lacks only one chance in 1017 of being absolute." (Stoner, SS, 100–107)

Stoner considers forty-eight prophecies and reports,

We find the chance that any one man fulfilled all 48 prophecies to be 1 in 10157. This is really a large number and it represents an extremely small chance. Let us try to visualize it. The silver dollar, which we have been using, is entirely too large. We must select a smaller object. The electron is about as small an object as we know of. It is so small that it will take 2.5 times 1015 of them laid side by side to make a line, single file, one inch long. If we were going to count the electrons in this line one inch long, and counted 250 each minute, and if we counted day and night, it would take us 19,000,000 years to count just the one-inch line of electrons. If we had a cubic inch of these electrons and we tried to count them it would take us, counting steadily 250 each minute, 19,000,000 times 19,000,000 times 19,000,000 years or 6.9 times 1021 years. (Stoner, SS, 109, 110)

Such is the chance of any individual fulfilling forty-eight prophecies.

#### Related Resources:

- [Holman Chart of Messianic Prophecies of the Old Testament - Part 1](#) (nice) - Specific Prophecy - OT References - NT Fulfillment
- [Holman Chart of Messianic Prophecies of the Old Testament - Part 2](#) (nice) - Specific Prophecy - OT References - NT Fulfillment

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**Norman Geisler** - The highly reputed "predictions" of Nostradamus were not that amazing at all. Contrary to popular belief, he never predicted either the place or the year of a great California earthquake. Most of his "famous" predictions, such as the rise of Hitler, were vague. As other psychics, he was frequently wrong, a false prophet by biblical standards.

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[John MacArthur](#) gives a summary of "the Expected One" which is in essence a recap of many of the [OT Messianic Prophecies](#)...

The Old Testament is filled with references to the Expected One that point unmistakably to Jesus Christ.

1. The Expected One, along with the Father and the Spirit, created everything (Gen. 1:1, 26; cf. John 1:1-3).
2. His coming was first promised to Adam and Eve immediately after the Fall. God reassured them that Satan, who had deceived and devastated them, would himself be destroyed by the Expected One (Gen. 3:15; cf. 1 John 3:8).

3. God's killing of animals to provide clothes to cover Adam and Eve's shame pictured His sacrifice for sin (Gen. 3:21).
4. The Expected One was to be a descendant of Abraham (Gen. 22:18; cf. Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:16), from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10; cf. Heb. 7:14).
5. The Old Testament priest Melchizedek ("king of righteousness"; Heb. 7:2) pictured the Expected One in that his lack of a recorded genealogy symbolized Christ's perpetual priesthood (cf. Heb. 6:20).
6. Abraham's offering of his son Isaac (Ge 22:1-14) symbolizes the sacrifice of the Expected One; just as God provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac, so also is Jesus the sacrifice for sinners (1 John 2:1-2).
7. Joseph, scorned and rejected by his brothers, nevertheless became their deliverer. In the same way Jesus "came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:11-12).
8. Noah's ark, a place of refuge from God's wrath, pictures Jesus—the true ark of safety in whom believers ride safely above the waves of divine judgment.
9. The angel of the Lord (Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-18; 31:11-13; Ex. 3:2-6; Jdg. 6:11-23; 13:2-22) was the preincarnate manifestation of the Expected One.
10. Every spotless, innocent lamb offered as a sacrifice pictured the final sacrifice of the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29; cf. 1 Peter 1:18-19).
11. The manna in the wilderness foreshadowed the coming of the Expected One, the true bread of life (John 6:31-58).
12. Aaron and all the high priests who succeeded him pictured the Lord Jesus Christ, the great high priest (Heb. 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-15; 6:20) who was to come.
13. The fiery serpent in the wilderness, to whom sinners bitten by poisonous snakes looked and were healed, symbolizes Jesus, who declared, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life" (John 3:14-15).
14. The Expected One was to be the ultimate prophet of whom Moses spoke (Deut. 18:15-19; cf. Acts 3:22-23; 7:37).
15. Boaz, Ruth's kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 4:1-12) was a type of Christ, the redeemer of His people (Matt. 1:21).
16. Like David, the shepherd king, the Messiah would come as a shepherd (John 10:11) and King (Matt. 27:11; John 1:49; Rev. 17:14).
17. The filling of the temple with God's glory (1 Kings 8:10-11) provided a glimpse of the glory of Jesus (John 1:14).
18. The Expected One is the Son of God and King of Psalm 2, the resurrected one of Psalm 16, the crucified one of Psalm 22, the shepherd of Psalm 23, and the betrayed one of Psalm 41.
19. Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would be a light shining on those who walk in darkness (Isa 9:2), be born of a virgin (Isa 7:14), bear exalted titles (9:6), be God with us (Isa 7:14; cf. Matt. 1:23), be a descendant of David (Isa 11:1), and sit on his throne (Isa 9:7). Isaiah also described the crucifixion of the Messiah and its profound theological implications in Isaiah 53.
20. The rest of the prophets filled in other details concerning Jesus, the Expected One. Micah predicted His birth in Bethlehem (5:2); Jeremiah, Herod's slaughter of the innocent male babies (Jer 31:15; cf. Matt. 2:17-18); Hosea, the flight of Joseph, Mary and Jesus into Egypt (Hos 11:1; cf. Matt. 2:15); Joel saw that through the coming of the Expected One the Spirit of God would be poured out (Joel 2:28-32; cf. Acts 2:16-18); Daniel predicted His death (Da 9:26); Zechariah predicted the triumphal entry (Zech 9:9), the exact amount Judas would receive for betraying Jesus (Zech 11:12-13), the piercing of Jesus' side (Zech 12:10), and the disciples' forsaking of Him (Zech 13:7).

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In his great little apologetic book [More than a Carpenter \(see free online\)](#) in chapter 9 "**Will the Real Messiah Please Stand Up**" Josh McDowell writes...

In the Old Testament there are sixty major messianic prophecies and approximately 270 ramifications that were fulfilled in one person, Jesus Christ. It is helpful to look at all these predictions fulfilled in Christ as his "address." You've probably never realized how important the details of your name and address are—and yet these details set you apart from the four billion other people who also inhabit this planet. With even greater detail, God wrote an "address" in history to single out his Son, the Messiah, the Savior of mankind, from anyone who has ever lived in history—past, present, and future. The specifics of this "address" can be found in the Old Testament, a document written over a period of 1,000 years which contains over 300 references to his coming. Using the science of probability, we find the chances of just forty-eight of these prophecies being fulfilled in one person to be only one in ten to the 157th power. The task of matching up God's address with one man is further complicated by the fact that all the prophecies of the Messiah were made at least 400 years before he was to appear. Some might disagree and say that these prophecies were written down after the time of Christ and fabricated to coincide with his life. This might sound feasible until you realize that the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, was translated around 150-200 B.C. This Greek translation shows that there was at least a two hundred-year gap between the prophecies being recorded and their fulfillment in Christ. Certainly God was writing an "address" in history that only the Messiah could fulfill.

There have been approximately forty major claims by men to be the Jewish Messiah. But only one—Jesus Christ—appealed to fulfilled prophecy to substantiate his claims, and only his credentials back up those claims.

What were some of those details? And what events had to precede and coincide with the appearance of God's Son? To begin, we need to go way back to Genesis 3:15. Here we have the first messianic prophecy. In all of Scripture, only one Man was "born of the seed of a woman"—all others are born of the seed of a man. Here is one who will come into the world and undo the works of Satan ("bruise his head"). In Genesis 9 and Genesis 10 God narrowed the "address" down further. Noah had three sons, Shem, Japheth, and Ham. Today all of the nations of the world can be traced back to these three men. But in this statement, God effectively eliminated two-thirds of them from the line of Messiahship. The Messiah will come through the lineage of Shem. Then, continuing on down to the year 2000 B.c., we find God calling a man named Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees. With Abraham, God became still more specific, stating that the Messiah will be one of his descendants.' All the families of the earth will be blessed through Abraham. When Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, many of Abraham's descendants were eliminated when God selected his second son, Isaac.<sup>2</sup> Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau, and then God chose the line of Jacob.<sup>3</sup> Jacob had twelve sons, out of whom developed the twelve tribes of Israel. Then God singled out the tribe of Judah for Messiahship and eliminated 11/12ths of the Israelite tribes. And of all the family lines within Judah's tribe, the line of Jesse was the divine choice.' One can see the probability building. Jesse had eight children and in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and Jeremiah 23:5 God eliminated 1/7th of Jesse's family line: we read that God's Man will not only be of the seed of a woman, the lineage of Shem, the race of the Jews, the line of Isaac, the line of Jacob, the tribe of Judah, but that he will also be of the house of David. A prophecy dating 1012 B.c.s also predicts that this Man's hands and feet will be pierced (i.e., he will be crucified). This description was written 800 years before crucifixion was put into effect by the Romans. Isaiah 7:14 adds that he will be born of a virgin: a natural birth of unnatural conception, a criterion beyond human planning and control. Several prophecies recorded in Isaiah and the Psalms 6 describe the social climate and response that God's man will encounter: his own people, the Jews, will reject him and the Gentiles will believe in him. There will be a forerunner for him (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1), a voice in the wilderness, one preparing the way before the Lord, a John the Baptist.

**THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER** Notice, too, the seven ramifications of a prophecy' that narrows the drama down even further. Here God indicates that the Messiah will (1) be betrayed, (2) by a friend, (3) for thirty pieces, (4) of silver, and that it will be (5) cast on the floor, (6) of the temple, and (7) used to buy a potter's field. In Micah 5:2 God eliminated all the cities of the world and selected Bethlehem, with less than 1,000 people, as the Messiah's birthplace. Then through a series of prophecies he even defined the time sequence that would set his Man apart. For example, Malachi 3:1 and four other Old Testament verses require the Messiah to come while the temple of Jerusalem is still standing. This is of great significance when we realize that the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 and has not since been rebuilt. The precise lineage; the place, time, and manner of birth; people's reactions, the betrayal; the manner of death. These are just a fragment of the hundreds of details that made up the "address" to identify God's Son, the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

**OBJECTION: SUCH FULFILLED PROPHECY WAS COINCIDENTAL** "Why, you could find some of these prophecies fulfilled in Kennedy, King, Nasser, etc.," replies a critic. Yes, one could possibly find one or two prophecies fulfilled in other men, but not all sixty major prophecies and 270 ramifications. In fact, if you can find someone, other than Jesus, either living or dead, who can fulfill only half of the predictions concerning Messiah which are given in Messiah in Both Testaments by Fred John Meldau, the Christian Victory Publishing Company of Denver is ready to give you a \$1,000 reward. II. Harold Hartzler, of the American Scientific Affiliation, in the foreword of a book by Peter W. Stoner writes: "The manuscript for Science Speaks has been carefully reviewed by a committee of the American Scientific Affiliation members and by the Executive Council of the same group and has been found, in general, to be dependable and accurate in regard to the scientific material presented. The mathematical analysis included is based upon principles of probability which are thoroughly sound, and Professor Stoner has applied these principles in a proper and convincing way." The following probabilities are taken from that book to show that coincidence is ruled out by the science of probability. Stoner says that by using the modern science of probability in reference to eight prophecies, "we find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10 to the 17th power." That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. In order to help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates it by supposing that "we take 100,000,000,000,000,000 silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as

far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom. "Now these prophecies were either given by inspiration of God or the prophets just wrote them as they thought they should be. In such a case the prophets had just one chance in 10 to the 17th power of having them come true in any man, but they all came true in Christ. "This means that the fulfillment of these eight prophecies alone proves that God inspired the writing of those prophecies to a definiteness which lacks only one chance in 10<sup>17</sup> of being absolute."<sup>9</sup>

**ANOTHER OBJECTION** Another objection is that Jesus deliberately at-tempted to fulfill the Jewish prophecies. This objection seems plausible until we realize that many of the details of the Messiah's coming were totally beyond human control. For example, the place of birth. I can just hear Jesus in Mary's womb as she rode on the donkey: "Mom, we won't make it . . ." When Herod asked the chief priests and scribes, "Where is the Christ to be born?" they said, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet" ([Matthew 2:5](#)). The time of his coming. The manner of his birth. Betrayal by Judas and the betrayal price. The manner of his death. The people's reaction, the mocking and spitting, the staring. The casting of dice for his clothes. The non-tearing of his garment, etc. Half the prophecies are beyond his fulfillment. He couldn't work it out to be born of the seed of the woman, the lineage of Shem, the descendants of Abraham, etc. No wonder Jesus and the apostles appealed to fulfilled prophecy to substantiate his claim. Why did God go to all this trouble? I believe he wanted Jesus Christ to have all the credentials he needed when he came into the world. Yet the most exciting thing about Jesus Christ is that he came to change lives. He alone proved correct the hundreds of Old Testament prophecies that de-scribed his coming. And he alone can fulfill the greatest prophecy of all for those who will accept it—the promise of new life: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you.. Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

#### Related Resource:

- See [Messianic Prophecies](#)

#### Matthew 11:4 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see:

NET Matthew 11:4 Jesus answered them, "Go tell John what you hear and see:

GNT Matthew 11:4 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ἰησοῦς ἐπεὶ αὐτοῖς, Πορευθέντες πᾶγγελάτε· ὡς ἴδωτε καὶ ἔχετε·

NLT Matthew 11:4 Jesus told them, "Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen--

KJV Matthew 11:4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

ESV Matthew 11:4 And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see:

NIV Matthew 11:4 Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see:

ASV Matthew 11:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see:

CSB Matthew 11:4 Jesus replied to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see:

NKJ Matthew 11:4 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see:

NRS Matthew 11:4 Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see:

YLT Matthew 11:4 And Jesus answering said to them, 'Having gone, declare to John the things that ye hear and see,

NAB Matthew 11:4 Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see:

NJB Matthew 11:4 Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see;

GWN Matthew 11:4 Jesus answered John's disciples, "Go back, and tell John what you hear and see:

BBE Matthew 11:4 And Jesus, answering, said to them, Go and give news to John of the things which you

are seeing and hearing:

### Related Passages:

Luke 7:18-21+ And the disciples of John reported to him about all these things. 19 And summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?" 20 And when the men had come to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?'" 21 At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He granted sight to many who were blind.

## YOU SAW IT NOW GO & TELL IT

**Jesus answered** (apokrinomai - to respond to a question asking for information) **and said to them**, "**Go** (imperative sense) **and report** (apaggello in aorist imperative = "Just Do It!") **to John what you** (present tense - continually) **hear and** (present tense - continually) **see** (blepo - take notice of) - Note that Jesus did not directly answer their question "Are you the Expected One?" What He was provide evidence that He was indeed the Messiah Who Israel should have been expecting! **Go and report** directed them to Jesus' deeds regarding the Old Testament prophecy in the book of Isaiah said that the Messiah would do (see Mt 11:5) Jesus was saying in essence for them to report to John that He was on schedule, was fulfilling Scripture and was doing exactly what the Bible predicted the Messiah would do. So yes, "I'm the Messiah!"

[Seeing is believing](#) as the old saying goes but of course John could not see it but would surely believe his disciples testimonies. Luke tells us what they saw and heard writing "At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind." (Lk 7:21+). John's disciples were to give a witness which would include not only things they heard, but also things they personally saw. It is notable that He did not answer "I am the Messiah." He answered with actions that one would expect to be associated with the Messiah.

*Listen to the words of Christ. See the works of Christ.*

*That was our Lord's prescription for times of doubt.*

-[Phil Newton](#)

**THOUGHT** - As believers while we likely have not witnessed any of the physical evidences of Jesus the Messiah, most of us have witnessed the far greater miracle of a dead sinner being born again and obtaining a new life in Christ (2Co 5:17+). So we too should obey Jesus' words and go and tell others. And if you are a believer, you have no excuse that you do not know anyone who has a changed life, because all you have to do is look in the mirror at the life that Jesus' Gospel as changed forever. So now go and tell!!!

**Spurgeon** - Our old proverb says that [actions speak louder than words](#), so an answer in his actions would be more eloquent with these inquirers than even an answer in our Lord's own words. He bade them look at the evidences of his Messiahship which he gave them by his miraculous cures, and then he said to them, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard." It would be well if our lives were such that, if any enquired what we were, we should only have to say that they might judge us by what they had seen and heard in our common everyday life and conversation.

**NET Note** on **what you have seen and heard** - The following activities all paraphrase various OT descriptions of the time of promised salvation: Isa 35:5-6; 26:19; 29:18-19; 61:1. Jesus is answering not by acknowledging a title, but by pointing to the nature of his works, thus indicating the nature of the time.

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** on Mt 11:4-5 - Our Lord makes no assertion, but sets clear evidence before the eyes of John's delegates. He based the evidence of his Messiahship upon his miracles. Why is it that, in these days, it is said that the miracles are rather a trial of faith than a support of it? An unbelieving generation turns even food into poison. What John had heard in prison his messengers were to see for themselves, and then to tell to their imprisoned master. Prison walls cannot shut out news of Jesus; but good news comes best through friends who are personal witnesses. The messengers received command "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see." Of hearing and seeing they had more than they could fully report, and more than enough to make them see for themselves that Jesus was the Christ. The cures wrought were all beneficent, superhuman, and of a kind foretold by the prophets as signaling the coming of Messiah. The proof was cumulative: the argument increased in power. The last two proofs are evidently placed as the climax of the argument: "The dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." These two wonders are placed side by side. There is as much of the miraculous in the poor man's gospel as in the dead man's resurrection. John's disciples had come at a right time when our Lord's work was in full swing, and all these wonderful works were following each other rapidly. Jesus is his own proof. If men would have arguments for the gospel, let them hear and see what it is, and what it does. Let us tell to souls in the prison of doubt what we have seen Jesus do.

**Lawrence Richards** - Even John seemed to have expected Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom. To settle his doubts, he sent his followers to put the question to Jesus directly: "Are You the One?" Jesus listed specific healing works John's followers had seen, because the Old Testament declared that in the Messianic Age just such works would be performed! Isaiah 35 says, "Your God will come," and while the passage speaks of divine retribution, it also says, "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shout for joy" (Isa 35:4–6; cf. Isa 61:1–2). The evidence of Christ's works alone was sufficient to identify Him as the Messiah: as Israel's God, come at long last! The answer surely was enough for John. He would set aside his preconceived ideas about how God must work, and simply trust. The other day our Florida lottery reached 22 million dollars. "I'm praying about a ticket," a friend said. "God surely would want one of His own to have that money. Only a Christian could use it wisely." It seems logical, all right. Yet it's an idea of how God must work that is based on human reasoning. Like John of old, you and I must be willing to set aside all preconceived ideas. We have evidence of God's love in the Cross. Now we are to simply trust that what He chooses to do is what's best. By the way. No lottery win for my friend. Yet.

**Myron Augsburger on Go and report** - While John was asking for "proof" of Jesus' messiahship, Jesus, instead of offering proof, gave him evidence. The walk of faith most often means to accept evidence in the place of proof. God is His own proof and faith will not stop short of coming to God Himself. The evidence which Jesus gave was that the prophet's words were being fulfilled (Is. 35:5; 61:1), that the messianic age had dawned with the Messiah's activities. (See [The Preacher's Commentary - Vol. 24: Matthew](#))

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**Report** (declare, tell, announce, proclaim) (518) **apaggello** from **apó** = from + **aggéllō** = tell, declare from **aggelos** = messenger, one who speaks in place of one who has sent him) means to bring a message from any person or place. To bring tidings from a person or thing. To relate, inform, tell what has occurred. In the present context the idea is to announce openly. **Apaggello** is the carrying of tidings or messages from the authentic source. **Apaggello** summarized (1) Carry back a message from a happening and thus give an account of something (to report, announce, tell, inform) (2) To proclaim or announce. To make something known publicly. It was used of a messenger, to bring tidings, report, announce

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**Ryle on Go and report to John what you have seen and heard** - We should mark in these verses, the peculiar answer which the disciples of John received from our Lord. We are told that "in the same hour He cured many of their infirmities and plagues." And then, "He said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard." He makes no formal declaration that he is the Messiah that was to come. He simply supplies the messengers with facts to repeat to their master, and sends them away. He knew well how John the Baptist would employ these facts. He would say to his disciples, "Behold in him who worked these miracles, the prophet greater than Moses.—This is he whom you must hear and follow, when I am dead.—This is indeed the Christ." ([Luke 7](#))

**THOUGHT - Ryle has a very interesting application of Jesus' answer to John's disciples** - Our Lord's reply to John's disciples, contains a great practical lesson, which we shall do well to remember. It teaches us that the right way to test the value of Churches and ministers, is to examine the works they do for God, and the fruits they bring forth. Would we know whether a Church is true and trustworthy?—Would we know whether a minister is really called of God, and sound in the faith?—We must apply the old rule of Scripture, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." As Christ would be known by His works and doctrine, so must true Churches of Christ, and true ministers of Christ. When the dead in sin are not quickened, and the blind are not restored to sight, and the poor have no glad tidings proclaimed to them, we may generally suspect that Christ's presence is wanting. Where He is, He will be seen and heard. Where He is, there will not only be profession, forms, ceremonies, and a show of religion. There will be actual, visible work in hearts and lives. ([Luke 7](#))

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## **James Butler - DOUBTS AND DISCOURAGEMENTS**

Matthew 11:4 "Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see" (Matthew 11:4).

Our text is about the time of discouragement and doubt that hit John the Baptist and how the Lord responded.

### FIRST—THE VOICE OF GOD

"Jesus answered." When John got into the slough of despond, he did not go to the bottle or the needle as so many do today. Instead he went to the Lord. What do you do when trouble comes? Many criticize and blame the Lord, or get on the phone and lament to the person on the other phone, or go to the psycho-advisers who will fleece them of their money and time but not give good answers, or they jump off some bridge or cliff, which is nothing more than jumping from the frying pan into the fire. John went to Jesus. He sent a delegation of his disciples, for he was in prison and could not go himself.

### SECOND—THE VICTIM OF DOUBTS

“Go and show John.” Great and good men are not exempt from repeated times of discouragement and doubts. It would be hard to find a better man than John the Baptist, but he still experienced the blues. And he experienced them repeatedly, for when Christ says to tell John “again” that implies that John had been in the pit of despondency before. Now all of this should be an encouragement to us. All of us are well acquainted with times of discouragement and doubts. We will all admit that everyday is not full of sunshine and every day does not see us lighthearted and up beat. And then we add to our blues by thinking that to experience the blues, we must be defective in our faith. It is not necessarily a sign of a defective faith and weakness to be discouraged at times. John the Baptist was not defective in character or weak in the faith yet in prison and had repeated attacks of discouragement and doubts. Satan would use these ‘down’ periods in our life to cause us to quit living for the Lord and to blame Him for our situation—John was in a prison which does not lend itself to encouraging thoughts.

### THIRD—THE VALUE OF REVIEW

“Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see.” The key word here is “again.” Jesus did not give them new evidence, new experiences, or a new show. He simply said to show “again” what they had shown him before. Thus they were to review and go over the same matters they had spoken to John the Baptist before. This shows us the value and importance of review. We breathe again and again in order to stay alive. Spiritually we must ponder, study, and mediate upon the Word of God again and again. We must go to church again and again. We must pray again and again. All this repetitious activity is essential for the health of our faith. The best facts are of no use to us if we forget them. John the Baptist was to go over the same truths again and again. And if that was necessary for John the Baptist, how much more necessary is it for you and me!

**Matthew 11:5 the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.**

NET Matthew 11:5 The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news proclaimed to them.

GNT Matthew 11:5 τυφλο ναβλ πουσιν κα χωλο περιπατο σιν, λεπρο καθαρ ζονται κα κωφο κο ουσιν, κα νεκρο γε ρονται κα πτωχο ε αγγελ ζονται.

NLT Matthew 11:5 the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor.

KJV Matthew 11:5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

ESV Matthew 11:5 the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.

NIV Matthew 11:5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

ASV Matthew 11:5 the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them.

CSB Matthew 11:5 the blind see, the lame walk, those with skin diseases are healed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news.

NKJ Matthew 11:5 "The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

NRS Matthew 11:5 the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.

YLT Matthew 11:5 blind receive sight, and lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and deaf hear, dead are raised, and poor have good news proclaimed,

NAB Matthew 11:5 the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.

NJB Matthew 11:5 the blind see again, and the lame walk, those suffering from virulent skin-diseases are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the good news is proclaimed to the poor;

GWN Matthew 11:5 Blind people see again, lame people are walking, those with skin diseases are made

clean, deaf people hear again, dead people are brought back to life, and poor people hear the Good News.

BBE Matthew 11:5 The blind see; those who were not able to, are walking; lepers are made clean; those who were without hearing, now have their ears open; the dead come to life again, and the poor have the good news given to them.

- **blind** - Mt 9:30 Ps 146:8 Isa 29:18 35:4-6 42:6,7 Lu 4:18 7:21,22 Joh 2:23 3:2 5:36 10:25,38 14:11,12 Ac 2:22 4:9,10
- **the lame** - Mt 15:30,31 21:14 Ac 3:2-8 14:8-10
- **the lepers** - Mt 8:1-4 10:8 2Ki 5:7,14
- **the deaf** - Isa 43:8 Mk 7:37 9:25
- **the dead** - Mt 9:24,25 Lu 7:14-16,22 Joh 11:43,44
- **the poor** - Mt 5:3 Ps 22:26 72:12,13 Isa 61:1-3 66:2 Zec 11:7 Lu 4:18 Jas 2:5
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 5:3+ "Blessed are the **poor** in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Luke 4:18+ "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL **TO THE POOR**. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN,

Luke 6:20+ And turning His gaze on His disciples, He began to say, "**Blessed are you who are poor**, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Luke 7:22-23+ And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. 23 "And blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me."

Matthew 8:1-4+ And when He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. 2 And behold, a leper came to Him, and bowed down to Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." 3 And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4 And Jesus \*said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and present the offering that Moses commanded, for a testimony to them."

Mark 7:37+ And they were utterly astonished, saying, "He has done all things well; **He makes even the deaf to hear**, and the dumb to speak."

Isaiah 29:18 And on that day the deaf shall hear words of a book, And out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.

Isaiah 35:5-6+ Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. 6 Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah.

**Steven Cole** comments - Isaiah 35:5 prophesied that Messiah would do such (**blind receive sight**), and Jesus had cited that reference when he told the messengers of John the Baptist, "*Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them*" (Lk 7:22-23+). In the Bible, only Jesus opened the eyes of the blind, and there are more of His recorded miracles in this category than any other. It shows Him to be the promised Messiah. ([When Jesus Passes By](#))

Isaiah 42:7 To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.

Isaiah 61:1-2+ The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; 2 To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,

**SEEING IS  
BELIEVING**

The **BLIND** ([tuphlos](#)) **RECEIVE SIGHT** ([anablepo](#) - present tense) and the **lame** ([cholos](#)) **walk** ([peripateo](#) - present tense), the **lepers** ([lepros](#)) **are cleansed** ([katharizo](#) - present tense) and the **deaf** ([kophos](#)) **hear** ([akouo](#) - present tense), the **dead** ([nekros](#)) **are raised up** ([egeiro](#) - present tense), and the **POOR** ([ptochos](#)) **HAVE THE GOSPEL** (good news) **PREACHED** ([euaggelizo](#) - present tense) **TO THEM**. - All of these are **Messianic prophetic promises** (cf Isa 35:5-6+, Isa 42:7, Isa 61:1-2+) which clearly indicate that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. John knew the OT and knew these prophecies spoke of the "**Expected One**." and no one else. The days of salvation foretold by Isaiah had indeed commenced, and would be consummated when Christ returns to establish His Messianic kingdom ([Millennium](#)). John's disciples could now walk back by sight, their faith undergirded and strengthened by what they had seen and heard.

**R C H Lenski** - In his answer Jesus says nothing about the "vengeance" (Isa. 35:4) and the judgment. This omission is significant. John is to leave that in the hands of him who is so gloriously fulfilling the prophecies regarding the Messianic works of grace. (Borrow [The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel](#) page 426)

**Blind receive sight** - (see commentaries on Lk 4:18+; Lk 18:35-43+) This quote is taken by Jesus from Isaiah 35:5-6+. Then **the eyes of the blind will be opened** And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah." Yes Jesus opened physically blind eyes but far more significantly He opened spiritually blind eyes with His Gospel declaring to His apostle Paul who He sent to the Gentiles "to **open their eyes** so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." (Acts 26:18+) (For excellent background see [Blind, Blindness on page 370 in Dictionary Of Biblical Imagery](#); also [What is spiritual blindness?](#))

*In the Bible, only Jesus opened the eyes of the blind, and there are more of His recorded miracles in this category than any other. It shows Him to be the promised Messiah.*

-[Steven Cole](#)

**Lame walk** (see commentaries on Lk 5:17-25+, Mt 15:30,31+, Mt 21:14+, Jn 5:8,9+). - This declaration fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah 35:6+ "Then the lame will leap like a deer."

**Lepers are cleansed** (see commentaries on Lk 5:12-16+; Lk 17:11-19+)

**Deaf hear** (See commentary Isa 35:5+; Isa 42:18).

**Dead are raised** (see commentaries on Mt 9:24,25+, Luke 7:11-17+; Lk 8:40-56+, Jn 11:43,44+) Augustine, in his sermon on this miracle, says: "Who knows how many dead the Lord raised visibly? For all the things that he did are not written. John tells us this. So then there were without doubt many others raised." (see John 21:25+)

**THE POOR** ([ptochos](#)) **HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED** ([euaggelizo](#)) **TO THEM** (See commentaries on **poor** in Luke 4:18+; Lk 6:20+; Lk 14:13, 21+) Note the most important "sign" of Jesus was listed last, the preaching of the **Gospel**. The physical signs "paved the way" for the spiritual truth of the **Gospel** which alone could heal a sin sick soul and save them from eternal destruction.

**D A Carson** has an interesting comment that "there is a second, more subtle level to Jesus' response. All four of the Isaiah passages refer to judgment in their immediate context: e.g., "your God will come ... with vengeance; with divine retribution" (Isa 35:4); "the day of vengeance of our God" (Isa 61:2). Thus Jesus was allusively responding to the Baptist's question: the blessings promised for the end time have broken out and prove it is here, even though the judgments are delayed." (Borrow [Expositor's Bible Commentary](#) page 54)

*those whom the people called trash,  
Jesus calls treasures.*

**Michael Andrus** - The proof Jesus offers of His messiahship is, first of all, that His kingdom is one where the rejected are received. In the first century none were more shunned than the blind, the lame, the lepers, and the deaf. They had no place, no name, no value. They were seen as canker sores on the culture, excess baggage on the side of the road. But those whom the people called trash, Jesus calls treasures. Not only that, His kingdom is one where the Gospel is preached –the good news that salvation is by grace through faith. No other world religion offers such a message. All others demand the right performance, the right sacrifice, the right chant, the right ritual, the right seance, the right experience, maybe even the right suicide. Theirs is a kingdom of tradeoffs. You do this, and God will give you that (you hope). The result? Either arrogance or fear.

*You are adopted, not when you do enough,  
but when you admit you can never do enough.*

Arrogance if you think you've achieved it, fear if you think you haven't. Christ's kingdom is different. It is a kingdom where membership is granted, not purchased. You are adopted, not when you do enough, but when you admit you can never do enough. The result is you serve, not out of arrogance or fear, but out of gratitude. (Andrus - [When God Sits on His Hands](#))

**Spurgeon** - According to our Lord's testimony, the preaching of the gospel to the poor is as great a proof of his Messiahship as the raising of the dead. Then how highly it ought to be prized by them, and how glad should they be who have the gospel now preached freely in their hearing!

**THOUGHT** - How sad that the [Health/Wealth teachers](#) (most are false) promote physical healing ahead of the greatest need, spiritual healing!

*Go back and tell John that  
the love of God is here*

**William Barclay** - Note the proof that Jesus offered. He pointed at the facts. The sick and the suffering and the humble poor were experiencing the power and hearing the word of the Good News. Here is a point which is seldom realized—this is not the answer John expected. If Jesus was God's anointed one, John would have expected him to say, "My armies are massing. Caesarea, the headquarters of the Roman government, is about to fall. The sinners are being obliterated. And judgment has begun." He would have expected Jesus to say, "The wrath of God is on the march." but Jesus said, "The mercy of God is here." Let us remember that where pain is soothed and sorrow turned to joy, where suffering and death are vanquished, there is the kingdom of God. Jesus's answer was, "Go back and tell John that the love of God is here." ([Luke 7](#))

*That man is blessed who so believes,  
that his faith cannot be stumbled.*

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - That man is blessed who so believes, that his faith cannot be stumbled. A hint for John. John had not fallen, but very possibly he had stumbled. He had been a little put to it, through a sense of non-deliverance in time of need, and therefore he had asked the question. Blessed is he who can be left in prison, can be silenced in his testimony, can seem to be deserted of his Lord, and yet can shut out every doubt. John speedily regained this blessedness, and fully recovered his serenity. Lord, grant me to be firmly settled in my convictions, that I may enjoy the blessedness which flows from unshattering faith. May nothing about thee ever cause me to stumble at thee!

**Craig Keener** - Some teachers compared the blind, lame and lepers to the dead because they had no hope of recovery. (See [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament - Page 198](#))

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**Blind** (5185) ([tuphlos](#) from [tuphlóo](#) = envelop with smoke, be unable to see clearly) can refer to literal blindness (Mt 9:27, 28; 11:5; 12:22; Lk 7:21, 22; Jn 9:1, 2, 3.; Acts 13:11; Lv 19:14; Job 29:15) but more often is used to describe spiritual blindness. Figuratively then [tuphlos](#) picture one's mind as blind, ignorant, stupid, slow of understanding, being unable to understand, incapable of comprehending (see Mt 15:14; 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26; Lk 4:18; Jn 9:39,40,41; Ro 2:19; 2Pe 1:9; Rev 3:17; Isa 42:16,18,19; 43:8) This sense speaks of both mental and spiritual blindness, often the result of self-deception so that one is unable to understand (spiritual truth). The Greek writers used [tuphlos](#) to describe those who were "mentally blind".

**Cleansed** (2511) ([katharizo](#) from [katharos](#) = pure, clean, without stain or spot; English words - catharsis = emotional or physical purging, cathartic = substance used to induce a purging, Cathar = member of a medieval sect which sought the purging of evil from its members) means to make clean by taking away an undesirable part. To cleanse from filth or impurity. [Click here \(and here\)](#) for more background on the important Biblical concept of **clean** and **cleansing**.

**Poor** (4434) ([ptochos](#) from [ptosso](#) = crouch, cringe, cower down or hide oneself for fear, a picture of one crouching and cowering like a beggar with a tin cup to receive the pennies dropped in!) is an adjective which describes one who crouches and cowers and is used as a noun to mean **beggar**. These poor were unable to meet their basic needs and so were forced to depend on others or on society. Classical Greek used the [ptochos](#) to refer to a person reduced to total destitution, who crouched in a corner begging. As he held out one hand for alms he often hid his face with the other hand, because he was ashamed of being recognized. **Ptochos** describes not simply honest poverty, and the struggle of the laboring man to make ends meet but also describes abject poverty, which has literally nothing and which is in imminent danger of real starvation. **Ptochos** focuses on a state of dependence, so that in Mt 5:3 "the poor in spirit" are those who have learned to be completely dependent on God for everything and these are the ones who possess the kingdom of heaven.

**Gospel preached** (2097) ([euaggelizo/euangelizo](#) from [eu](#) = good, well + [aggéllō](#) = proclaim, tell; English = evangelize) means to announce good news concerning something. **Euaggelizo** was often used in the [Septuagint](#) for preaching a glad or joyful message (cf. 1Sam. 31:9; 2 Sa 1:20; 4:10). **Euaggelizo/euangelizo** in its original sense could be used to refer to a declaration of any kind of

good news, but in the NT it (with 2 exceptions discussed below) refers especially to the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God and of salvation obtained through Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Most of NT uses of **euangelizo** are translated "preach" or "preach the gospel," whichever fits more smoothly into the context. There are two passages that illustrate the original meaning of simply to "bring glad tidings" or "bring good news" of any nature. The first is in Luke...**Lk 1:19** And the angel answered and said to him (Zacharias), "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God; and I have been sent to speak to you, and to **bring** you this **good news**. (that he would have a son, John the Baptist).

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**Matthew 11:5** - None were more shunned by their culture than the blind, the lame, the lepers, and the deaf. They had no place. No name. No value. Canker sores on the culture. Excess baggage on the side of the road. But those whom the people called trash, Jesus called treasures.

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**Moravian Daily Texts** - Jesus said, "The good news is proclaimed to the poor." Matthew 11:5 (NIV)

Good news! Our Christ has come!  
Good news to all the world.  
He comes to preach good news,  
new life for evermore.  
God's spirit dwells in all who care,  
in all who share 'til want is gone. (630\*)

God of the poor, God of the humble, give bread to the hungry and, to those who have bread, give a hunger for justice. Amen.

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**J C Philpot -**

**In a lame state "The lame walk."** Matthew 11:5

When the Spirit begins a work of grace upon the heart, God's people are made sensible that they are in a lame state—that they are crippled, paralytic, bedridden—unable to lift up a leg or a finger. Man is dead in sin—his faculties are all crippled—he is utterly helpless in the things of God.

**Born blind? "The blind receive their sight."** Matthew 11:5

In what state and condition are we by nature? Are we not—blind to our state as sinners before God? blind to the spirituality and condemning power of the law? blind to the majesty, greatness, holiness, and purity of God? blind to the beauty and preciousness of Immanuel? blind to the personality and operations of God the Spirit? And is not this blindness a feature that universally prevails? Are we not, in a spiritual sense, born blind? Do we not grow up in that blindness? And can any natural power remove it? Can any light in the judgment—can any doctrines received in the mind—can any profession of religion—can anything that nature has done or can do—remove that blindness? It cannot be removed by any power of man in himself.

It is the special work, the grand prerogative of the Son of God, to remove this blindness by communicating spiritual eyesight. And this is done in a moment. There was an instant, though we may not be enabled to recollect it, when divine light was brought into our dark minds—and the blind received sight. A child of God cannot understand how, or why it is—but he knows that he once was blind—but now he sees! There is in his soul an inward perception—and that this inward perception is attended with certain sensations—to which sensations he was a stranger in times past.

Whenever the blind receive sight, they see the purity and spirituality of God's character. Before the blind receive sight, they think that God is such a one as themselves. They have no idea of—no internal acquaintance with—the infinite purity, holiness, and spirituality of Jehovah. They therefore never bow down before Him—there is no trembling of heart at His great name—no bringing down of proud imaginations at His footstool—no inward shrinking into self before the loftiness of the Most High—no perception of His glory—no yielding up of the heart in subjection—no adoration nor admiration of His eternal Majesty! But wherever spiritual eyesight is given, and the purity and holiness of Jehovah are made known to the heart, there will be, as we find all through the Scripture—self-abasement. "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have

seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

The purity, holiness, and spirituality of God's character, produced in the saints of old, this prostration of soul before Him. The Lord God Almighty reveals in the soul His purity, spirituality, and holiness—to bring guilt upon the soul—to drive it out of every lying refuge—and beat out of its grasp every hope, but that which He Himself implants. He beats us out of every false refuge—strips us of every natural hope—and removes every creature prop from under our souls. He displays His dreadful majesty—sets our secret sins before our eyes—and searches the very bottom of our hearts—to bring us near the Son of His love—to draw us to the bosom of the Lord of life and glory—and make Him dear and precious to our souls!

#### **"The dead are raised up." Matthew 11:5**

"The dead are raised up." The "dead" are those who by nature are dead in sin. These dead are raised up when life from God visits their souls. They are raised up to faith in Jesus, raised up to hope in his name, raised up to a sense of his dying love to their souls, raised up from doubt and fear, raised up from the depths of despondency, to look unto him and be saved. What a mercy it is that the Lord of life and glory still puts forth the same power in the hearts of his people, that he once put forth in their bodies, and that he raises them up from their state of death and deadness!

Do we not often feel so dead, as though we had not a particle of the grace of God? So dead, that it seems scarcely possible to have a sensation of spiritual life again? So dead, that we almost fear whether the power of God was ever felt in our hearts? Now, the Lord raises up life and feeling in our souls, by putting forth the same power that called Lazarus out of the tomb. And every lifting up of the heart towards him, every panting desire to know him, and the power of his resurrection, every breathing of tender affection, every sigh, cry, and groan, yes, every feeling, however short, however transient, Godwards, is a proof that the Lord of life and glory is still putting forth his power in the hearts of his people.

#### **"The poor have the gospel preached to them." Matthew 11:5**

What is the gospel? Is not the gospel a proclamation of pure mercy, of super-abounding grace? Does it not declare the loving-kindness of God in sending his only-begotten Son to bleed and die, and, by his obedience, blood, and merit, to bring in a salvation without money and without price? Is not this the gospel? Not clogged by conditions, nor crippled by anything that the creature has to perform; but flowing freely forth as the air in the skies? The poor to whom the gospel is preached, value it; it is suitable to them; it is sweet and precious when the heart is brought down. But if I stand up in religious pride, if I rest upon my own righteousness, if I am not stripped of everything in the creature, what is the gospel to me? I have no heart to receive it; there is no place in my soul for a gospel without money and without price.

But when I sink into the depth of creature poverty, when I am nothing and have nothing but a mass of sin and guilt, then the blessed gospel, pardoning my sins, covering my naked soul, shedding abroad the love of God, guiding me into everything good, and leading me up into enjoyment with a Three-One God, becomes prized. When such a pure, such a blessed gospel comes into my heart and conscience, has not my previous poverty of spirit prepared me for it? Has not my previous beggary and necessity made a way for it, made it suitable to me, and when it comes, makes it precious to me? We must, then, sink into poverty of spirit, that painful place, in order to feel the preciousness, and drink into the sweetness and blessedness of the gospel of the grace of God.

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#### **C H Spurgeon - Preaching for the poor (Full sermon [Preaching for the Poor](#))**

"The poor have the gospel preached to them." Matthew 11:5

There was a tinker once, who never so much as brushed his back against the walls of a college, who wrote a Pilgrim's Progress. Did ever a doctor in divinity write such a book? There was a pot-boy once—a boy who carried on his back the pewter pots for his mother, who kept the Old Bell. That man drove men mad, as the world had it, but led them to Christ, as we have it, all his life long, until, loaded with honours, he sank into his grave, with the good will of a multitude round about him, with an imperishable name written in the world's records, as well as in the records of the church. Did you ever hear of any mighty man, whose name stood in more esteem among God's people than the name of George Whitefield? And yet these were poor men, who, as Wycliffe said, were taking to the preaching of the gospel. If you will read the life of Wycliffe, you will find him saying there, that he believed that the Reformation in England was more promoted by the labours of the poor men whom he sent out from Lutterworth than by his own. He gathered around him a number of the poor people whom he instructed in the faith, and then he sent them two and two into every village, as Jesus did. They went into the market-place, and they gathered the people around; they opened the book and read a

chapter, and then they left them a manuscript of it, which for months and years after the people would assemble to read, and would remember the gospellers that had come to tell them the gospel of Christ. These men went from market-place to market-place, from town to town, and from village to village, and though their names are unknown to fame, they were the real reformers.

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**Chris Tiegreen - [The One Year Experiencing God's Presence Devotional: 365 ... - Page 6](#)**

The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor. Matthew 11:5

In heaven, where God's Presence is most tangible and obvious, there's no pain. There's no sickness or deafness or blindness. No one is crippled, and certainly no one is dead. Everyone is healthy and whole.

Jesus, God incarnate and filled with the Holy Spirit, carried the environment of heaven with Him during His ministry. In His Presence, sickness and pain had to bow. Blind eyes and deaf ears were opened. Both the disease of leprosy and its stigma were undone. Cripples—and even a few dead people—got up and walked. Wherever He went, circumstances had to recognize His authority.

That ought to tell us something. We often pray for healing for our infirmities, knowing that Jesus has the power to make us healthy and whole. But is it really healing we seek? Or would we be wiser to pray for His Presence? When we pray for healing, He certainly may give it, and we'd be made well and have a wonderful testimony of His power. But if we pray for His Presence, we get more. He makes us well simply by His nearness, but we also get Him—a fuller, more satisfying outcome. A prayer for healing is a prayer for a wonderful gift from God, but a prayer for Presence is a prayer for the God who brings gifts with Him. It's a plea for relationship, which always hits closer to God's heart.

Whatever you need from God, ask for the whole package—His Presence, first and foremost, and then everything that comes with it. Wherever He is, so is the environment of heaven.

Jesus, I want You and all that You bring. I know my greatest need isn't the request I'm asking; it's the Person I'm asking. Please answer in every way, but mostly with Yourself.

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**Rod Mattoon applies this section on John's questions from a dungeon** - At this point I want to stop and ask, "Are you in a dungeon right now and facing some doubts in your life about the Lord and His Word? Do you doubt His awareness of your problems, His ability to provide solutions, or the accuracy of His promises?" You may ask, "Would a Christian ever do this?" Oh my, you better believe it. Fear can do a number on all of us. You may not feel hesitant or doubtful now, but you might later. Fear can grip your heart like a cold hand with icy fingers, leaving you with chills down your spine. You may not entertain these thoughts, doubts, or concerns, but others do. Let me say that God wants us to be people of faith and stability, especially when we pray. [James 1:6](#)—But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. James states that we are not to "waver" when we pray. The word "wavering" is from the Greek word *diakrino* which means "hesitating, doubting, or staggering." This is NOT to characterize our praying. Some call this "drunken praying" because the person staggers like a drunk at the promises of God and His ability to answer our prayers. His faith is weak. The person who goes to the Lord for wisdom, and then rushes to one person after another for advice, like a pinball bouncing from one bumper to another, and tries one scheme after another without God's direction, makes a mockery of his prayer for wisdom.

What causes us to waver or doubt and how do we deal with it? What causes us to double-check God and His Word in our dungeons? The Bible gives us some answers.

### **Causes of Double-Checking or Doubt**

#### **1. Suppositions or Expectations That Are Unfulfilled**

Luke 7:20—When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

As we noted earlier, John's unfulfilled expectations of Jesus led to doubting. How many times have believers become embittered with the Lord because the Lord did not do what they desired or prayed?

#### **2. Skepticism:**

Luke 1:18-20—And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. [19] And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. [20] And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

When we get cynical like Scrooge, we become doubtful. We start getting the attitude, "Sure, I've heard this before. Humbug!"

#### **3. Society's Wisdom and Reasoning:**

1 Corinthians 1:18, 19—For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

The unbelief of unsaved people can intimidate the belief of believers if they are not careful. Don't listen to their skepticism.

#### 4. Spiritual Instability:

James 1:6, 7, 8—But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Make up your mind to believe God and follow Him.

#### 5. Small Faith:

Matthew 14:31—And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

#### 6. Satan:

Genesis 3:4—And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

Satan desires to get us to question and doubt God's Word. His voice may seem logical like the argument of a trial lawyer or it may be seductive like a beautiful woman's whisper in your ear. No matter how Satan may tempt you, mark it down, he is powerful and will lead you astray if you are not careful. Do not underestimate his strength, and your weakness.

### B. Conquering Doubt and the Urge to Double-Check God

#### 1. Search the Scriptures:

Acts 17:11, 12—These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

#### 2. Serve the Lord:

John 7:17—If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

#### 3. The Scriptures Are to Be Believed:

Luke 16:27-31... Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: [28] For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. [29] Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. [30] And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. [31] And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

#### 4. Substantiate the Lord's Power:

Malachi 3:10—Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

#### 5. Supplications Are to Be Made to the Lord:

1 Timothy 2:8—I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.  
([Treasures from the Scriptures](#))

**Matthew 11:6 "And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."**

NET Matthew 11:6 Blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

GNT Matthew 11:6 κα μακ ρι ς σπιν ς ν μ σκανδαλισθ ν μο .

NLT Matthew 11:6 And tell him, 'God blesses those who do not turn away because of me. ' "

KJV Matthew 11:6 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

ESV Matthew 11:6 And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

NIV Matthew 11:6 Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

ASV Matthew 11:6 And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me.

CSB Matthew 11:6 And if anyone is not offended because of Me, he is blessed."

NKJ Matthew 11:6 "And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

NRS Matthew 11:6 And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

YLT Matthew 11:6 and happy is he who may not be stumbled in me.'

NAB Matthew 11:6 And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

NJB Matthew 11:6 and blessed is anyone who does not find me a cause of falling.'

GWN Matthew 11:6 Whoever doesn't lose his faith in me is indeed blessed."

BBE Matthew 11:6 And a blessing will be on him who has no doubts about me.

REB those who do not find me an obstacle to faith'

NCV 'those who do not stumble in their faith because of me'

Leon Morris 'anyone who is not tripped up on account of me'

- **blessed** - Mt 5:3-12 Ps 1:1,2 32:1,2 119:1 Lu 11:27,28
- **he who does-** Mt 13:55-57 Mt 15:12-14 18:7 24:10 26:31 Isa 8:14,15 Lu 2:34 Lu 4:23-29 Joh 6:60,61,66 Jn 7:41,42 Ro 9:32,33 1Co 1:22,23 2:14 Ga 5:11 1Pe 2:8
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 13:21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately **he falls away**. ([skandalizo](#))

Matthew 13:54-57+ And coming to His **home town** (NAZARETH) He began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they became astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom, and these miraculous powers?" "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? 56 "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" 57 And they **took offense** ([skandalizo](#)) at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his own household."

Matthew 15:12+ Then the disciples ([mathetes](#)) came and \*said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees **were offended** ([skandalizo](#)) when they heard this statement?"

Luke 7:23+ "And blessed is he who keeps from **stumbling** ([skandalizo](#)) over Me."

## THE MOST UNFAMILIAR BEATITUDE

**And blessed** ([makarios](#)) **is he who does not take offense** ([skandalizo](#) - is scandalized by) **at Me** ("blessed is he who is not trapped because of Me") - NLT - 'God blesses those who do not turn away because of me. ' The interpretation of this verse is not straightforward. Was this to be spoken only to John or was it to be to any who might be offended by Him? Commentators are not in agreement.

One might say this was for John's ears, but it is clear that John believed, even though he had doubts. So some feel that if John focused on the words and works of Jesus, he would be blessed because he would not "turn away" from Him. On the other hand, it is not as clear what was the condition of John's disciples. And thus, in context, some think this beatitude would seem to be addressed to John's disciples. To be sure whoever heeds this warning, is promised by Jesus a blessing if they are not scandalized by Him, but

believe in Him as the Messiah.

**Take offense at Me** is paraphrased by the Jerusalem Bible "anyone who does not find me a cause of falling." The idea of the verb [skandalizo](#) is literally "to be trapped," and thus to "be ensnared away from," the Truth.

[ESV Study Bible page 1832](#) (borrow) says "The beatitude is a mild rebuke; John and his disciples must be open to God's unfolding plan, even though Jesus' ministry did not exactly match their messianic expectations."

**R C H Lenski** - He (JOHN THE BAPTIST) is not to let the absence of certain works blind him to the glorious presence of the works now in full progress. Let him be satisfied with these and trust that in due time the others will follow just as these are now being done. (Borrow [The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel](#) page 426)

**Norman Crawford** - The verb [skandalizo](#) (to take offence) is the word from which we get our English word scandal. It means to shock or offend moral feelings and to bring disgrace by shameful actions. This is the word that Paul uses about the attitude of unbelieving Jews toward the cross; it was an offence to them (1 Cor 1:23+). Believers bore reproach and persecution because of "the offence of the cross" (Gal 5:11+, contrast Gal 6:14+). In a day when a cross is a symbol of religious veneration, we can scarcely grasp what a scandal it presented to the minds of unbelieving Jews, "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (Deut 21:23+; Gal 3:13+). The Lord Jesus ever had the cross before Him, and we do not go beyond the meaning of the text when we suggest that the Lord is describing those who would stumble at Him, reject Him and eventually crucify Him. We should never accuse John of taking such offence. ([What the Bible Teaches: Luke](#))

**Michael Andrus** - Jesus concludes his response to John by pronouncing a blessing on those who take no offence at him. How gentle is this rebuke! Jesus does not scold John for doubting. Instead he reminds him that a special blessing awaits those who continue to trust despite their confusion and despite the difficult circumstances in which they find themselves. Jesus may not offer immediate vindication to the righteous or immediate judgment on the wicked, but he reassures us nonetheless that God's plan is on schedule and on track. ([When God Sits on His Hands](#))

**Adrian Rogers** - Now, John, you're in prison:"—He didn't tell him this, but He could have told him—"It's going to get worse. You're going to have your head cut off. You're in prison. You're in trouble. But, John, if you're in prison, and I don't get you out of prison, it's not because I don't want to, or am not able to, or I don't care about you. It's just, John, I have a better plan and a higher plan. And, frankly, John, you couldn't understand it if I told you, because my ways are not your ways and my thoughts not your thoughts. As the heavens are high above the earth, so are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8–9) "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?... who hath been his counsellor?" (Romans 11:34) How inscrutable are the ways of God! My friend, don't demand to understand, and don't get a pout with God if you don't understand why He doesn't get you out of your prison. There's more than one kind of prison. You might be in a financial prison: your blood pressure is up, and your bank account is down. You may be in a physical prison. You may be in a family difficulty. There may be some great dungeon of despair that you're in, and you're saying, "Why doesn't God deliver me? If God can do all of those things—if He can raise the dead, heal the lame—why doesn't God do something?" It's like the little boy, he said, "If God's so great, why didn't He put the vitamins in ice cream rather than spinach?" "Why doesn't God do it the way I want Him to do it?" Frankly, friend, His ways, the Bible says, are past finding out; and it takes a lot of faith sometimes to let God be God. ([Are you Angry With God? page 819](#))

**David Abernathy** - What does *σκανδαλιζομαι* 'to be trapped' mean in this verse? Here Jesus is referring to John's disappointment due to the fact of the Messiah not being in accord with his expectations [CC-J Gibbs, WBC-D. Hagner]. This assumes that the questioner has begun well and must now avoid stumbling. To do this he must reexamine his presuppositions about the Messiah. John should trust Jesus and not be tripped up by his own preconceived ideas of what the Christ should be and do [PNTC - Leon Morris]. ([An Exegetical Summary of Matthew 1-16](#))

**William MacDonald** - This may be understood as a rebuke; John had been **offended** by the failure of Jesus to seize the reins of authority and to manifest Himself in the way people expected. But it may also be interpreted as an exhortation to John not to abandon his faith. C. G. Moore says: *I know of no hours more trying to faith than those in which Jesus multiplies evidences of His power and does not use it ... There is need of much grace when the messengers come back saying: "Yes, He has all the power, and is all that you have thought; but He said not a word about taking you out of prison...." No explanation; faith nourished; prison doors left closed; and then the message, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." That is all!* (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

*John was no time-server,  
no flattering courtier, no pleaser of the great.*

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - Our Lord will sooner or later bear testimony to the man who has faithfully testified of him. John honors Jesus; and in due time Jesus honors John. Our Lord asks his hearers what they thought of John. You went to see John; you even "went out into the wilderness" to have a look at him. What did you see? A vacillating orator? A man who felt the influence

of his times, and bowed before its spirit, like a bulrush in the breeze? Nay, verily; John was no time-server, no flattering courtier, no pleaser of the great. The Baptist had not sent to Jesus because he was weak, but because he was honestly outspoken, and so anxious for absolute certainty that he could not endure the shadow of a doubt. John sent to headquarters to make assurance doubly sure, by a new declaration from Christ's own lips.

*"Blessed is he whomsoever does not get upset by the way I run My business."*

--Vance Havner's Paraphrase

**Merrill Tenney on take offense** - And he appealed to John not to be offended (Lk 7:23+) by the way he conducted his ministry. "Offend" (Gr. skandalizo) has the meaning of "cause to go astray," or "cause to err," rather than "to displease." (Wycliffe Bible Commentary - [Luke Comments](#))

**Cornerstone Biblical Commentary** - John's understandable doubt and disappointment could be safely put aside, for the telltale messianic signs were plainly in evidence. Jesus did not want John to give in to doubt and despair. The messengers were to tell him, "God blesses those who do not turn away because of me" (Lk 7:23+). (See [Luke, Acts](#))

**Walter Liefeld** comments "Jesus pronounces a blessing on the person who accepts His credentials rather than being trapped (*skandalisthe*, NIV, "fall away") because of a false evaluation of Jesus. (Borrow [The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

*"Don't wrestle. Just nestle."*

--Corrie Ten Boom

**J C Ryle** - We should mark, lastly, in these verses, the solemn warning which our Lord gave to John's disciples. He knew the danger in which they were. He knew that they were disposed to question His claim to be the Messiah, because of His lowly appearance. They saw no signs of a king about Him, no riches, no royal apparel, no guards, no courtiers, and no crown. They only saw a man, to all appearance poor as any one of themselves, attended by a few fishermen and publicans. Their pride rebelled at the idea of such an one as this being the Christ! It seemed incredible! There must be some mistake! Such thoughts as these, in all probability, passed through their minds. Our Lord read their hearts, and dismissed them with a searching caution. "Blessed," He said, "is he that is not offended in me."

**THOUGHT**- Ryle applies Jesus warning message - The warning is one that is just as needful now as it was when it was delivered. So long as the world stands, Christ and His Gospel will be a stumbling-block to many. To hear that we are all lost and guilty sinners, and cannot save ourselves,—to hear that we must give up our own righteousness, and trust in One who was crucified between two thieves,—to hear that we must be content to enter heaven side by side with publicans and harlots, and to owe all our salvation to free grace,—this is always offensive to the natural man. Our proud hearts do not like it. We are offended. Let the caution of these verses sink down deeply into our memories. Let us take heed that we are not offended. Let us beware of being stumbled, either by the humbling doctrines of the Gospel, or the holy practice which it enjoins on those who receive it. Secret pride is one of the worst enemies of man. It will prove at least to have been the ruin of thousands of souls. Thousands will be found to have had the offer of salvation, but to have rejected it. They did not like the terms. They would not stoop to "enter in at the strait gate." They would not humbly come as sinners to the throne of grace. In a word, they were offended. And then will appear the deep meaning in our Lord's words, "Blessed is he who shall not be offended in me." (**ED: BUT THEN IT WILL BE TOO LATE!**) (Luke 7)

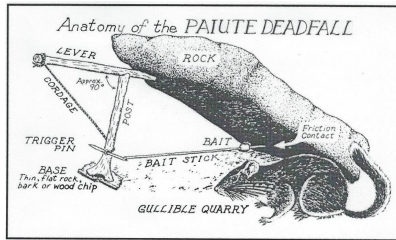
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**Blessed** (3107)([makarios](#) from root **makar**, but others say from **mak** = large or lengthy) means to be happy, but not in the usual sense of happiness based on positive circumstances. From the Biblical perspective **Makarios** describes the person who is free from daily cares and worries because his every breath and circumstance is in the hands of His Maker Who gives him such an assurance (such a "blessing"). As discussed below **makarios** was used to describe the kind of happiness that comes from receiving divine favor.

**Makarios uses by Luke** - Lk. 1:45; Lk. 6:20; Lk. 6:21; Lk. 6:22; Lk. 7:23; Lk. 10:23; Lk. 11:27; Lk. 11:28; Lk. 12:37; Lk. 12:38; Lk. 12:43; Lk. 14:14; Lk. 14:15; Lk. 23:29; Acts 20:35; Acts 26:2

**Take offense** (4624)([skandalizo](#) from [skandalon](#)= a trap = put a snare or stumbling block in way; English = scandalize = to offend the moral sense of) means to put a snare (in the way), hence to cause to stumble, to give offense but has only figurative meanings in the NT. To entrap, trip up, or entice to sin, offend. Turning away is literally "stumbling," which refers to spiritual defeat or apostasy. In Mt 5:29-30+ **skandalizo** is used in the active sense which conveys the idea to cause to do wrong, to entice to commit sin. In the passive sense it means to be led into sin, to be caused to do wrong. In the passive some uses mean to be offended (Mt 11:6),

the idea being that one is taking offense at Jesus and/or refusing to believe in Him. Finally, skandalizo can mean to furnish an occasion for some to be shocked, angered, or offended (Mt 17:27). Luke's only other use is Lk 17:2 "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to **stumble.**" [Robertson](#) on **skandilizo** in Lk 7:23 - has the double notion of to trip up and to entrap and in the NT always means causing to sin. Louw-Nida adds This verb means to be offended because of some action [LN (25.180)], or to fall into sin due to certain contributing circumstances [LN (88.30)], or to give up believing what is right and let oneself believe what is false [LN (31.77)].



DEPICTION OF "SKANDALON/SKANDALIZO"

**Skandalizo** is derived from [skandalon](#) which refers to stick in a trap on which the bait is placed and which springs up and shuts the trap at the touch of the careless, unwary animal. It follows that the idea is to put a stumbling block or impediment in one's way, upon which another may trip and fall. Jesus' point is that anything or anyone that morally traps us (by our senses, visual, touch, and by expansion not excluding the other senses such as hearing), and causes us to fall into sin should be eliminated, radically and quickly. If we do not make every necessary effort to control our surroundings, what we watch and read, who we keep company with and speak with, etc, then those things will control us. If you cannot control something, it needs to be "jettisoned" to keep the boat afloat so to speak.

**Skandalizo** - 27v - cause(1), cause...to stumble(2), causes(2), causes...to stumble(6), fall away(7), falls away(1), led into sin(1), makes...stumble(2), offend(1), offended(1), stumble(3), stumbling(1), take(1), take offense(1), took offense(2). Matt. 5:29; Matt. 5:30; Matt. 11:6; Matt. 13:21; Matt. 13:57; Matt. 15:12; Matt. 17:27; Matt. 18:6; Matt. 18:8; Matt. 18:9; Matt. 24:10; Matt. 26:31; Matt. 26:33; Mk. 4:17; Mk. 6:3; Mk. 9:42; Mk. 9:43; Mk. 9:45; Mk. 9:47; Mk. 14:27; Mk. 14:29; Lk. 7:23; Lk. 17:2; Jn. 6:61; Jn. 16:1; 1 Co. 8:13; 2 Co. 11:29

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**Sammy Burgess** ([When God Is Near and Yet Seems So Far Away](#)) During the Second World War, when Hitler was blitzing London, for safety purposes, the children were loaded into train after train and moved out of the city. One little fellow was asked, "Where are you going?" He replied, "I don't know, but the King knows."

We may not understand all that is going on, but the King does. Don't get upset because God doesn't work {how} and {when} you think He ought to work. Let the Lord do what He wants and how He wants instead of getting upset with Him.

There is a Creed inscribed on a plaque at the Institute of Rehabilitative Medicine in New York, City.

"I ask God for strength that I might achieve; I was made weak that I might learn to obey.  
 I ask God for health that I might do greater things; I was given infirmity that I might do better things.  
 I asked for riches that I might be happy; I was given poverty that I might be wise.  
 I asked for power that I might have the praise of men; I was given weakness that I might feel the need for God.  
 I asked for all things that I might enjoy life; I was given life that I might enjoy all things.  
 I received nothing that I asked for; but I got everything that I hoped for."

Never forget that the Lord is always at work, even when we don't see Him at work. When he works in ways that we do not understand, don't be offended or upset with God. He knows what He is doing.

I heard a story about a 10 year old boy named Danny Aialo. {I-e-lo}. Danny Aialo was in a tragic automobile accident and lost his left arm. His physical therapist who was trying to get this boy back into physical and psychological shape was a Judo expert. He begin to get this boy back into shape by teaching him Judo.

As the therapist begin to teach Danny Aialo Judo, he became very interested in it. The therapist then, after several days of therapy, referred Danny to his Judo master, a "black belt" specialist from Japan. This Judo specialist took interest in Danny Aialo and took him on as one of his students. Every day, Danny Aialo went down to the studio (one arm; no left arm) and work out with all the other students. Danny became very good at Judo.

The Regional championship came up and all the students were wanting to participate, including Danny Aialo.

The Judo Master tried to discourage Danny from participating; but Danny insisted that he enter the event. Danny wouldn't take "no" for an answer.

The Judo Master began to show the other students several new moves; but he only showed Danny Aialo one move. After several days of training, Danny became frustrated. He couldn't understand why they Judo Master showed the other students 10 new moves, but showed him only one move. The Judo instructor told Danny Aialo that he would have to trust him. He wanted Danny to perfect this one move so he could enter the tournament. Danny Aialo was offended, but he had no other choice but to trust his instructor. THE INSTRUCTOR WAS NOT TREATING DANNY AIALO DIFFERENTLY; HE WAS TREATING HIM SPECIALLY! He told Danny that if he would perfect this one move, he would win the tournament.

It came time for the tournament and the students participated and did very well. The little one armed boy Danny Aialo won his first 3 matches. In the finals, he was going to face the boy who was the defending champion.

Nobody gave Danny Aialo a chance to win the match. In fact, the first few minutes were awful. Danny was beaten, bruised, broken, but he wouldn't quit. The referee came close to calling the match because of the beating Danny was taking. But the referee saw something in Danny's eyes and knew that he wasn't about to give up.

As Danny Aialo struggled in his match, his eyes caught the eyes of his Judo instructor. His instructor eyes looked hard into the eyes of Danny as if to say; "Danny; it's time to use your move." Danny used his one move with his one arm; beat that kid and won the championship.

When the match was over with, Danny asked the instructor; "What was so special about that move that you taught me?" The coach smiled and said; "Danny; the only known defense for that move is for your opponent to grab your left arm."

Let me teach you a lesson worth learning:

Behind every problem you face lies the Purpose of God! SO DON'T DOUBT HIM! EVEN WHEN LIFE DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.

(1)- WITH SUFFERING - God's Power is Received.

(2)- IN SUFFERING - God's Provision is Released.

(3)-THROUGH SUFFERING - God's Person is Revealed. {11:3}- "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" God is who He says He is. Even when life doesn't make sense

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### **Vance Havner - The Blessing of the Unoffended**

JOHN the Baptist, a rugged, outdoor ascetic, found prison life depressing and sent to know whether Jesus really was the Messiah. Great men may know moods of doubt and despondency. Our Lord simply declared that His works proved His mission, then paid John fine tribute. Here, He declared, was no comfortable, fashionable court preacher but a real prophet, and that no greater man had arisen. Yet the humblest believer in the age of grace is greater, in point of privilege, than John who lived under law. The difference is in position, not a matter of moral worth.

Our Lord declared (Matt. 11:12) that the kingdom suffered violence, and the violent took it by force—comparing those who were pressing into the kingdom to soldiers storming a fortress. Verily, the things of God are not for loafers: we must be violently resolute if we are to press into the deeper things; we must be diligent to make our calling and election sure. Then He said John was the Elijah prophesied in Malachi 4:5-6. Meanwhile, the Pharisees were like spoiled children who could not be suited with any kind of preaching, the fasting of John or the feasting of Jesus. But wisdom is vindicated by her children—in the lives of her disciples, in that wise children receive truth in any garb, and in the sense that wisdom is proven by what she does, the results she produces.

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### **C H Spurgeon - Offended with Christ** (Full sermon [Offended with Christ](#))

'And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.' Matthew 11:6

There are not a few who professed to become Christians and who thought that they were always going to be happy. The evidence that they gave of being Christians was that they felt so happy. I do not know that mere happiness is any evidence of being a Christian at all, for many are living far from God and yet account themselves very happy, while some of those who live near to God are groaning because they cannot get nearer still. Yet a joyful feeling is by many regarded as conclusive evidence of salvation; they

add to this the notion that as soon as ever they believed in Jesus Christ the conflict was all over, and there remained nothing more to be done in the way of resisting sin and denying the lusts of the flesh. They dreamed that they had only to start on pilgrimage and get to the Celestial City in a trice, only to draw the sword from the scabbard and all Canaan would be conquered in an hour. Very soon they find that it is not so. Their old corruptions are alive; the flesh begins to pull a different way from that which they profess to have chosen, the devil tempts them and they are so disappointed by their new discovery that they become offended with Christ altogether. A sudden victory would suit them, but to carry a cross before winning a crown is not to their mind. Others of them have met an opposition they did not expect from their adversaries, while from their friends they have not met with all the respect that they think they ought to have. Their friends and acquaintances have laughed at them; they did not reckon on this, they never counted the cost, and so they are offended with Christ.

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### **Vance Havner - The Forgotten Beatitude**

John the Baptist, the rugged ascetic Elijah of the New Testament, was imprisoned in a dark, dismal, desolate dungeon. It was no place for such an outdoor preacher and his feelings hit a record low. He sent a delegation to Jesus to ask, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matthew 11:3). That was a record low for John the Baptist. What he had preached like a living exclamation point had become a question mark to the Preacher Himself.

*He made His best statement about John the Baptist on the same day the prophet had made his worst statement about the Lord.*

But our Lord did not reprimand the troubled prophet. Instead He made His best statement about John the Baptist on the same day the prophet had made his worst statement about the Lord. And He reminded John that the blind were seeing, the deaf were hearing, the lame were walking, the lepers were being cleansed and the poor were hearing the Gospel. Then He added what is perhaps the most unfamiliar of all the beatitudes, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (Matthew 11:6). In other words, "Blessed is he who does not get upset by the way I run my business!"

My Lord is running on schedule. He is carrying out His program according to plans and specifications. He may not be carrying on as we expected. John the Baptist was preaching a Messiah coming in judgment but here was a meek and lowly Jesus going about doing good. God does not operate by our timetable and sometimes it does not add up on our computers.

It is a day of dungeons and many Christians are in the clutches of a giant despair. It may be ill health. It may be bereavement and one's heart lies in a grave. It may be financial. Other things than stone walls can a prison make and other things than iron bars can form a cage. Then there is the distressing world situation. Why doesn't God do something? If He is the Prince of Peace, King of kings, and Lord of lords, why doesn't He come back and clean up this mess? The world is in a dungeon and they are not looking for Jesus, they are looking for another and, as our Lord predicted, there are false Christs and messiahs everywhere.

John the Baptist had announced both the Lamb of God and the coming Messiah. Today my Lord is still carrying on His redemptive work but one day He will return as a lion and set up His Kingdom, establish law and order, and reign in righteousness. I am not looking for another. My Christ has already come and He is coming back. In the meantime He is still doing what He came to do the first time. I have made up my mind to claim the forgotten beatitude. I do not understand all He does and why He does it. The past months have found me often in a dungeon. But I will not be upset or find in Him a stumbling block. He is either a sanctuary or a snare (See Isaiah 8:14). I find in Him a Sanctuary. I claim the blessing of the unoffended. Make up your mind that, no matter how the Lord handles your personal problem and no matter how slowly He may seem to end the misery of this evil age, there is a beatitude for saints in dungeons.

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### **G Campbell Morgan - Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me—Matt. 11.6**

These are the final words of the message which the Lord sent to John the Baptist, when he inquired as to whether He was indeed the Christ. They constitute a warning which we all need to bear in mind. There can be no question that John was perplexed by the methods which the Lord was adopting, and that perplexity was due to the fact that even he had not fully apprehended the meaning of Messiah-ship. Had Jesus preached so as to raise a revolution and create an army, John would have been more satisfied. This is a perpetual peril. It is not easy yet to understand why God does not do something more startling. It is that idea which underlies the question which we sometimes hear as to why God does not do thus or so. It is that idea which inspires all those activities in the Name of Christ which are attempts to improve upon His methods. To all such restless impatience, He utters the same warning. We are called upon to trust Him so completely as to be content to follow Him in those quiet, persistent methods which consist of attending to individuals, and getting things done one by one, simply, quietly, and with persistent patience. There are hours for demonstration, for, under some circumstances, if men do not shout, stones will cry out. For the most part the way of the Lord's service is the way of plodding perseverance in the doing of apparently small things. The history of the Church shows that this is one

of the lessons most difficult to learn. It also proves that the measure in which it is learned and practised is the measure of real co-operation with God.

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**F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily** - Matthew 11:6 Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.

A friend has turned these words into another beatitude — The blessedness of the unoffended. The Baptist was tempted to take offence with Christ, first, because of his long delay in asserting Himself as the promised Messiah; and secondly, because of his apparent indifference to his own welfare. "If He be all that I expected, why does He leave me in this sad plight, extending to me no word of comfort; making no attempt to free me from these dark, damp cells."

Are there not such hours in our lives still? We say, If He really love us and is entrusted with all power, why does He not deliver us from this difficult and irksome condition? Why does He not hurl these prison walls to the ground? Why does He not vindicate and bring me out to the light of life and joy?

But the Lord made no attempt to emancipate his servant; and He seems to be unmindful of our sore straits. All He did for John was to send him materials on which his faith should feed, and rise to a stronger, nobler growth. "Go back," He said in effect to John, "tell him what I can do; he is not mistaken — I have all power, I am the expected King; and if I do not come to his help in the way he expects, it is not through lack of power and willingness, but because of reasons of Divine policy and government, to which I must be true. Tell him to trust Me, though I do not deliver him. Assure him of the blessedness which must accrue to those who are not offended at my apparent neglect. I will explain all to him some day." Thus He speaks still. He does not attempt to apologize, or to explain — He only asks our trust; and promises blessedness to those who do not stumble at life's mysteries.

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**J C Philpot** - What is the feeling of your heart toward Jesus? What is the solemn desire of your soul? that He would come and make your heart his abode? that He would visit your soul with the light of his countenance? that He would sprinkle his blood upon your conscience? that He would make himself very near, very dear, and very precious? Do you count one word from His lips worth a thousand worlds? a smile from His countenance worth thousands of gold and silver? Then you are blessed. You are not stumbling upon the dark mountain of error. You are not stumbling at the perfections of the Son of God. You are not offended at a free gospel, an unconditional salvation. No; the Lord in mercy has slaughtered your prejudices, subdued your enmity, and brought you to receive the gospel as a little child. "Well," but some may say, "I believe all this; but, then, I have doubts and fears whether the Lord has begun His work in me, whether I am one of His family. I cannot enjoy the power of truth as I could wish." But does not the Lord say, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me?" You are not offended and stumbled at Jesus. And he that is not offended in Him, but is enabled to receive Him as the Christ of God, to look to Him, to believe in Him, and at times to feel Him precious—He comes under the blessing which maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it.

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**Matthew 11:7 As these men were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"**

NET Matthew 11:7 While they were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"

GNT Matthew 11:7 Το των ὀ πορευομ νων ρξατο ησο ς λ γειν το ς χλοις περ ω ννου, Τ ξ λθατε ε ς τ ν ρημον θε σασθαι; κ λαμον π ν μου σαλευ μενον;

NLT Matthew 11:7 As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began talking about him to the crowds. "What kind of man did you go into the wilderness to see? Was he a weak reed, swayed by every breath of wind?"

KJV Matthew 11:7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

ESV Matthew 11:7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"

NIV Matthew 11:7 As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind?"

ASV Matthew 11:7 And as these went their way, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to behold? a reed shaken with the wind?

CSB Matthew 11:7 As these men went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the wind?"

NKJ Matthew 11:7 As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"

NRS Matthew 11:7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind?"

YLT Matthew 11:7 And as they are going, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John, 'What went ye out to the wilderness to view? -- a reed shaken by the wind?'

NAB Matthew 11:7 As they were going off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind?"

NJB Matthew 11:7 As the men were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John, 'What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No?'

GWN Matthew 11:7 As they were leaving, Jesus spoke to the crowds about John. "What did you go into the desert to see? Tall grass swaying in the wind?"

BBE Matthew 11:7 And when they were going away, Jesus, talking of John, said to all the people, What went you out into the waste land to see? a tall stem moving in the wind?

- **Jesus** - Lu 7:24-30
- **What** - Mt 3:1-3,5 21:25 Mk 1:3-5 Lu 3:3-7 8:18 Joh 1:38 5:35
- **A reed** - Ge 49:4 2Co 1:17,18 Eph 4:14 Jas 1:6
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Luke 7:24-30+ When the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 25 "But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are found in royal palaces! 26 "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet. 27 "This is the one about whom it is written, 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.' 28 "I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." 29 When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John. 30 But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.

## JESUS CLARIFIES HIS OPINION ON JOHN B

**As these men were going away** - Obeying Mt 11:4 "'Go and **report** to John what you hear and see."

**J C Ryle** - THE first point that demands our notice in this passage, is the tender care which Jesus takes of the characters of His faithful servants. He defends the reputation of John the Baptist, as soon as his messengers were departed. He saw that the people around him were apt to think lightly of John, partly because he was in prison, partly because of the inquiry which his disciples had just brought. He pleads the cause of His absent friend in warm and strong language. He bids His hearers dismiss from their minds their unworthy doubts and suspicions about this holy man. He tells them that John was no wavering and unstable character, a mere reed shaken by the wind.

**Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John** - Keep the context in mind - Jesus is addressing the crowd after John the Baptist's disciples have come to ask Him if He is truly the Messiah. Once they leave, Jesus turns to the people to affirm John's ministry and character. Jesus wants to assure the crowd He was neither rebuking or repudiating John the Baptist with His previous remarks.

**Louis Barbieri** proposes that "Perhaps some began to wonder about John's commitment to the Messiah in light of his question. So Jesus explained that John was not weak and vacillating. He was not a papyrus reed that could be shaken by every breeze that blew." (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Page 44](#))

What did you go out ([exerchomai](#)) into the wilderness ([eremos](#)) to see ([theaomai](#))? A reed ([kalamos](#)) shaken ([saleuo](#)) by the

**wind ([anemos](#))?** - Jesus' rhetorical question expected a negative response. "To our Lord's question no answer was needed. John had rejected the overtures of the nationalists (John 1:19-21+), and had not feared to rebuke a king (Matthew 14:4+)." ([Pulpit Commentary](#)) A **reed** was a common plant along the Jordan River, thin, fragile, and easily bent by the slightest breeze. Jesus uses this vivid image to make a point. Jesus challenges the crowd to consider why they were drawn to John in the first place. Jesus begins by praising John negatively by giving questions to the crowd. Jesus says that John B is not like a reed waving in the breeze, not easily swayed, not spineless and not vacillating. John is anything but a pliable person! Although Jesus does not say it, clearly John B is more like a sturdy oak. John refused to cater to the crowd's approval, and thus he was not moved by the winds of approval or public opinion.

**Spurgeon** - The wind on the banks of the Jordan, where there are plenty of reeds growing; — did you see a man who would bow before every breath of popular favor or popular wrath? Was John the Baptist such a man as that? No, certainly not.

**Marvin Vincent on to see** - expresses the calm, continuous contemplation of an object which remains before the spectator. Compare John 1:14. Another verb is used in Christ's repetition of the question, Mt 11:8, 9; ὄειν in the ordinary sense of seeing. The more earnest expression suits the first question.

Regarding the verb see [Pulpit Commentary](#) has an interesting comment - It almost suggests that they went out as though to see a spectacle. They were stirred by no deeper motive. Bengel compares John 5:35+ "He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light."

Jesus' question also highlights the contrast between John's prophetic boldness and the fickleness of the crowds. John stood firm in truth, even when it cost him his freedom and eventually his life. Jesus' words remind us that true servants of God are not driven by public opinion or fear of man, but by obedience to God's calling. As Proverbs 29:25 teaches, "The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe." Similarly, Ephesians 6:13 urges believers to "take up the whole armor of God... and having done all, to stand firm." John's ministry exemplified that kind of spiritual strength and conviction.

In a broader sense, Jesus' question invites all who hear Him to examine their motives and expectations. Many sought John for spectacle or novelty, but Jesus calls them to recognize the deeper spiritual reality—that John was the forerunner of the Messiah, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Isaiah 40:3). Just as in Luke 11:7, where Jesus uses a parable to teach persistence and trust in God's character, here He uses a question to draw the crowd toward spiritual discernment and faith.

Ultimately, Matthew 11:7 reminds us that God's messengers are not shaped by the winds of culture or convenience, but by the unchanging truth of His Word. John's steadfastness points us to Christ Himself, who is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

**NET NOTE** - There is a debate as to whether one should read this figuratively ("to see someone who is easily blown over?") or literally (Grk "to see the wilderness vegetation?... No, to see a prophet"). Either view makes good sense, but the following examples suggest the question should be read literally and understood to point to the fact that a prophet drew them to the desert.

**J C Ryle on What did you go out into the wilderness to see?**- Let it be noted that both here and in the two following verses the question is equivalent to a strong and positive affirmation. It is as if our Lord had said, "John the Baptist was not a reed shaken by the wind,"—"was not a man clothed in soft raiment,"—"was not merely a prophet."—Such a form of expression is not uncommon in the Bible. A striking example is to be seen in the famous question, "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" It is equivalent to saying, "It shall profit him nothing at all." ([Luke 7](#))

**Pulpit Commentary** - When the messengers of John were departed, the Lord, fearful lest the people who had been standing by and listening to the question which the Baptist had put, and his answer, should entertain any disparaging thought of a great and sorely tried saint of God, spoke the following noble testimony concerning that true, faithful witness. It has been termed the funeral oration of John; for not long after it had been spoken he was put to death by Herod Antipas. The imagery was taken from the scenery in the midst of which John the Baptist had principally exercised his ministry — the reedy banks of Jordan. It was surely to see an everyday sight — a weak vacillating man blown to and fro with every wind. John, though his faith failed him for a moment perhaps, was no wavering reed.

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**See (2300)** ([theaomai](#) from *tháomai* = to wonder, from *thaúma* = wonder, admiration <> English = theatrical spectacular performance) means (1) to have an attentive look, to have regard for something, to contemplate, to take in with one's eyes (implying that one is impressed by what he sees - see use in Mt 22:11). *Theaomai* implies an intent contemplative gaze. The point is that it is not a mere glance or quick look, but a long, searching gaze (e.g., Lk 23:55). *Theaomai* describes intelligent beholding, a "careful and deliberate vision which interprets its object" (G. Abbott-Smith). It means to gaze at a show or demonstration or to watch as in a theater. (thus giving us the origin of our English word "*theater*").

**THEAOMAI - 22V** - Matt. 6:1; Matt. 11:7; Matt. 22:11; Matt. 23:5; Mk. 16:11; Mk. 16:14; Lk. 5:27; Lk. 7:24; Lk. 23:55; Jn. 1:14; Jn. 1:32; Jn. 1:38; Jn. 4:35; Jn. 6:5; Jn. 11:45; Acts 1:11; Acts 21:27; Acts 22:9; Rom. 15:24; 1 Jn. 1:1; 1 Jn. 4:12; 1 Jn. 4:14

**Reed** (2563)(**kalamos**) refers to a flexible stalk or stem of a plant. It refers to the plant itself which is easily shaken (bent or broken) and which sways in the wind (Mt. 11:7; 12:20 from Isa. 42:3; Lk 7:24; 1 Ki 14:15; Job 40:21). Kalamos can refer to the stalk which is cut for use, e.g., as a mock scepter in mocking Jesus, a "scepter" the soldiers then took and began to beat our Lord on the head (Mt. 27:29, 30). Kalamos describes a measuring reed (rod) in the Revelation and Ezekiel (Rev. 11:1; 21:15, 16; Ezek. 40:3, 5, 6 - see below for all uses in Ezekiel). Kalamos was used of reed for writing, (3 John 1:13; Ps. 44:1) which was used on papyrus. Used in medicine for [insufflation](#), etc.

**Mattoon** - A "reed" is the cane-like grass that grows on the banks of the Jordan River. It grew twelve feet high with beautiful blossoms at the top. It was so slender that it yielded to a gust of wind by laying flat and then would stand upright again when the wind ceased. To compare a person to a reed was to say that the person was without moral fiber or courage, easily tossed about by various opinions, never taking a stand on anything. In addition, reeds were everywhere; they were commonplace. Obviously, the people did not flock into the wilderness to see something commonplace, nor did they go to see a weak and fearful person. Instead, the people were attracted by John's fiery preaching and willingness to speak out against sin. John was a man that stood firm and straight, no matter what way the winds of society were blowing. He was like a majestic oak tree that was unmoved by the gale winds of turbulent circumstances. John stood for the truth no matter where others stood or how much pressure was exerted upon him. He refused to compromise with evil, even if it meant he would lose his freedom. The hammer of Hell pounded him on the anvil of conformity, yet the sparks of his life revealed his hardness and unwillingness to compromise or conform to heathen molds and evil expectations. ([Treasures from the Scriptures](#))

**Matthew 11:8 "But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings' palaces!"**

NET Matthew 11:8 What did you go out to see? A man dressed in fancy clothes? Look, those who wear fancy clothes are in the homes of kings!

GNT Matthew 11:8 ἄλλ' ἤλθατε δεῖν; ἄνθρωπον ἢ μαλακῶς μίσησιν; ὁ οὐ μαλακὸς φοροῦντες ἐν τοῖς βασιλείων οἴκοις.

NLT Matthew 11:8 Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? No, people with expensive clothes live in palaces.

KJV Matthew 11:8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

ESV Matthew 11:8 What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

NIV Matthew 11:8 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces.

ASV Matthew 11:8 But what went ye out to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft raiment are in king's houses.

CSB Matthew 11:8 What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothes? Look, those who wear soft clothes are in kings' palaces.

NKJ Matthew 11:8 "But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

NRS Matthew 11:8 What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces.

YLT Matthew 11:8 'But what went ye out to see? -- a man clothed in soft garments? lo, those wearing the soft things are in the kings' houses.

NAB Matthew 11:8 Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces.

NJB Matthew 11:8 Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Look, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces.

GWN Matthew 11:8 Really, what did you go to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? Those who wear fine clothes are in royal palaces.

BBE Matthew 11:8 But what went you out to see? a man delicately clothed? Those who have fair robes are in kings' houses.

- **A man** - Mt 3:4 2Ki 1:8 Isa 20:2 Zec 13:4 1Co 4:11 2Co 11:27 Rev 11:3
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JOHN'S CLOTHING REVEALS HE IS THE MAN

They say [clothes make the man](#). This idiom says you can judge a man's character by the clothes he wears. Well John's clothing proved he was the man he claimed to be, a prophet and forerunner of the Messiah. John would probably not have made the front cover of [GQ \(Gentleman's Quarterly\)](#)!

**But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft([malakos](#)) clothing ([himation](#))? Those who wear soft ([malakos](#)) clothing are in kings' palaces** - Jesus now describes John B's appearance stating he is not a silk and satin courtier. In fact, Mt 3:4 states John B "had a garment of camel's hair, and a leather belt about his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey." Probably many in the throng had been among those who went out to John when he was popular at the beginning of his ministry. And so the second point of defending John was that he was not a rich man. Anyone who saw him knew that was the case. He was in a palace of sorts at this very time but in the dungeon of the palace!

As **Michael Andrus** says "John is no [pantywaist](#), no [bootlicker](#) ready to [kowtow](#) to the political authorities. He has lived the hardest of lives on the simplest of rations in the roughest of places. Instead of indulging in luxury in a king's palace he has openly rebuked the king, earning himself a reservation at Herod's Hanoi Hilton. ([When God Sits on His Hands](#))

**Phil Newton** explains that "It was customary for the king's friends to be rewarded for their loyalty by wearing the luxurious clothing of royalty. But such were the king's friends because they told the king precisely what he wanted to hear rather than what he needed to hear. They were his "Yes-Men" - stroking the kingly ego in order to live in ease and comfort. John wore no such clothing of kingly favor. He dressed in rough, scratchy camel hair and had a leather girdle about his waist. He knew nothing of the comforts of king's palaces but only about the king's dungeon. John was no politician, testing the winds of public or royal opinion before he preached. He was a man of strong convictions, so much so that he would face imprisonment and death to denounce the adulterous ways of Herod Antipas. Convictions are strong, unbending positions that one holds because of his understanding of truth and law. It seems that we scarcely see convictions these days. Many politicians are known for flip-flopping on their promises and positions. Many of the media stars seem to be conviction-less, being moved like the tall river grass in the wind by gales of rationalism. But Christ honored the convictions demonstrated by John the Baptist. John did not dampen his finger to check the winds of popular opinion before declaring his positions. He stood firmly upon truth - even if it cost him dearly. That, my brethren, is what it means to have convictions. And that is a seed of greatness.

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - Did you see a man of courtly manners, costly dress, pompous diction, delicate expressions? Was John a court preacher, fit to flatter royal ladies? If so, how came he to be in the wilderness? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. John was hated for his plain rebukes, and revenge against him burned in the heart of one near the throne because he knew not how to be silent in the presence of royal sin. John the Baptist was not in the palace: he had been promoted to the prison. His style had grated on the ear of a shameless princess; for he knew not how to speak soft words like those who are "clothed in soft raiment." Thus does our Lord bear witness to John who came to be his witness.

**Sammy Burgess** on **A man dressed in soft ([malakos](#)) clothing** - Jesus was no doubt referring to the courtiers of King Herod, whose luxurious lifestyle typified "soft raiment." The art of these courtiers was the flattery of the king. Jesus was asking, "When you heard John did you hear some spineless sissy who only sought to make you feel better, or do you hear someone that pulled out a dagger and went straight for the heart.

**Spurgeon** on **a man dressed in soft ([malakos](#)) clothing**, etc - They do not preach repentance. As is their clothing, so is their doctrine. They try to show a royal road to heaven — a smooth and easy path. But was John the Baptist a preacher of that kind? No, that he was not. John had been preaching in the desert, with all his might warning sinners to flee from the wrath to come. He was no

court preacher, but a minister to the multitude, who delivered his heaven-inspired message in his own straightforward earnest style.

**J C Ryle** - He tells them that John was no mere courtier and hanger-on about king's palaces, though circumstances at the end of his ministry had brought him into connexion with king Herod.

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**Soft (3120)** malakos carries a rich range of meaning that moves from the physical realm into moral and spiritual characterization, and its force in Scripture depends heavily on that progression. At its most basic level, **malakos** means “soft” or “pliable to the touch.” In classical Greek and everyday usage, it described tangible objects—especially fine clothing of delicate texture. This is the sense used by Jesus in Matthew 11:8 and Luke 7:25, where “soft garments” distinguish those living in luxury from the rugged austerity of John the Baptist. The idea here is not moral failure, but refinement, delicacy, and comfort, things associated with wealth and ease rather than hardship.

From that literal meaning developed a figurative extension applied to character. Just as something physically soft lacks firmness, so a person described as malakos came to signify one who is morally weak, lacking discipline, or given over to indulgence. Greek writers used the term broadly for those who were self-indulgent, pleasure-driven, or unwilling to endure hardship. In this sense, the word points to a life ruled by the senses rather than by virtue—what later writers describe as voluptuousness or addiction to fleshly desires.

This moral weakening becomes even more specific in certain contexts, especially in Greco-Roman culture, where malakos was used of males who took a passive, feminized role in sexual relationships. In that cultural framework, the word described not merely outward mannerisms but a yielding of one's body in a way considered contrary to nature and order, often associated with exploitation or moral degradation. Thus, it could denote what classical sources call a catamite—one who submits passively in a same-sex act.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9+, the Apostle Paul uses the plural malakoi in a vice list describing those whose lives are characterized by unrepentant sin: “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor **effeminate** (malakoi), nor homosexuals...” Here, malakoi stands alongside αρσενικοιται ([arsenokoitai](#)), a term referring to the active participant in homosexual acts. Together, the pairing reflects both sides of such behavior as understood in that cultural and linguistic context. However, the meaning of **malakoi** should not be reduced narrowly to one act alone. Its broader moral sense still underlies Paul's usage as a condition of moral softness, surrender to sensuality, and lack of self-control, expressed in this case in sexual behavior.

Importantly, the word also carries a spiritual implication beyond the specific behavior. Scripture consistently calls believers to strength, steadfastness, and self-control “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13). “Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” (1 Timothy 4:7).

In contrast, malakos represents the opposite disposition, a life that is **easily swayed, governed by appetite, and unwilling to resist sin**. It is not merely about external conduct but about an inner posture of yielding to the flesh rather than submitting to God (cf. Romans 6:12–13).

In summary, **malakos** moves from physical softness → moral weakness → sensual indulgence → specific sexual passivity in a sinful context. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, it functions as a morally charged term describing those whose lives are marked by unrestrained, self-indulgent softness, particularly manifested in sexual sin, and stands as a warning that such patterns, when unrepented, are incompatible with inheriting the kingdom of God (cf. Galatians 5:19–21).

**Matthew 11:9 “But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet.**

NET Matthew 11:9 What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

GNT Matthew 11:9 λ λ τ ξ λθατε δε ν; προφ την; να λ γω μ ν, κα περισσ τερον προφ του.

NLT Matthew 11:9 Were you looking for a prophet? Yes, and he is more than a prophet.

KJV Matthew 11:9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

ESV Matthew 11:9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

NIV Matthew 11:9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

ASV Matthew 11:9 But wherefore went ye out? to see a prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a

prophet.

CSB Matthew 11:9 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and far more than a prophet.

NKJ Matthew 11:9 "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet.

NRS Matthew 11:9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

YLT Matthew 11:9 'But what went ye out to see? -- a prophet? yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet,

NAB Matthew 11:9 Then why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

NJB Matthew 11:9 Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet:

GWN Matthew 11:9 "Really, what did you go to see? A prophet? Let me tell you that he is far more than a prophet.

BBE Matthew 11:9 But why did you go out? to see a prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet.

- A prophet - Mt 11:13-14 Mt 14:5 Mt 17:12,13 21:24-26 Mk 9:11-13 Lu 1:15-17,76
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 14:5+ Although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded John as a **prophet**.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS MORE THAN A PROPHET

**But** (term of contrast) **what did you go out to see? A prophet** ([prophetes](#))? **Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet** ([prophetes](#)) - John was a **prophet** in the sense that he had been set apart by God to proclaim a specific word to the people. Keep in mind that Israel had been a "no prophet" country for almost 400 years so John B clearly aroused the people's attention so that multitudes went out in the wilderness to see ([theaomai](#)) this prophet. Like a true prophet John spoke to the multitudes with authority and with a call for repentance (Mt 3:2+, Mk 1:4+). He did not understand the color gray (i.e., saw either "black or white" with no middle ground) or straddling the fence. Why was John **more than a prophet**? For one thing, John was God's special messenger, the Messiah's forerunner ([prodromos](#)). While the other OT prophets (John B was still effectively an OT prophet) foretold "Messiah is coming," John was the one who said "Messiah is here." Another reason John was greater is found in Mt 11:11 where He himself fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.

**Trites** has an interesting note that "By repeated use of a rhetorical question ("What did you go out [into the desert] to see?"...), Jesus challenged his hearers to face the serious moral and ethical issues posed by John as an authentic spokesman for God. (See [Luke, Acts Cornerstone Biblical Commentary](#))

*John had confessed his Lord, and now his Lord confesses him.*

*This is a rule with our King.*

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** on Mt 11:9-10 - John was all that the very greatest of the prophets had been; and he came nearer to Jesus than all the rest; his Master's steps were close upon his heel. He shone like Milton's star — "Fairest of stars, last in the train of night, If better thou belong'st not to the dawn." He was almost a gospel-preacher, and failing to reach that point, he was chief among the prophets, yea, and more than a prophet. In the book of Malachi, the Lord God had promised to send a messenger before Messiah, and now the Messiah himself quotes the prophecy with a change of persons not to be understood save as we believe in the Trinity in Unity. He who is "Me" is also "Thee" according to the aspect in which he is regarded, or the person who speaks. John was the messenger of God to prepare the way of the Lord Jesus, and our Lord recognizes him in that honored capacity. Jesus is not ashamed of his herald because he is in prison, but the rather he speaks the more openly of him. John had confessed his Lord, and now his Lord confesses him. This is a rule with our King.

Why was John **more than a prophet**? Several thoughts -- John was "more than a prophet" because in a sense he himself fulfilled prophecy (Mal 3:1+, Isa 40:3) while also testifying to its fulfillment in Jesus. Because he was sent to fulfill Malachi's prophecy.

Malachi 3:1+ prophesied "Behold, I am going to send **My messenger** (JOHN THE BAPTIST), **and he will clear the way before Me**. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts."

Isaiah 40:3 A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

John was not only a **prophet** but was the **messenger** who introduced Jesus and the Gospel era. John stood uniquely at the climax of redemptive history, serving as the final and greatest prophet of the Messiah. John's role in God's redemptive plan was utterly unique unlike that of the other OT prophets who predicted Messiah but did not personally introduce the Messiah (Jn 1:29, 36+).

In other words, unlike the prophets of the Old Testament who foretold Christ from a distance, John the Baptist was chosen to actually behold Him, identify Him, and publicly present Him to Israel. John's ministry marked the transition between the Old covenant and the New covenant. He stood at the threshold of the kingdom of God, announcing its arrival and calling Israel to repentance in preparation for the Messiah's appearance (Mt 3:1-3+). He functioned as the divinely appointed bridge between promise and fulfillment, closing the era of prophetic anticipation while ushering in the reality of God's kingdom in Jesus Christ (Lk 16:16+). In summary, John was **more than a prophet** not because he differed in message (the OT prophets repeatedly called Israel to "Repent!"), but because of his unparalleled role and privilege in directly introducing the long-awaited Messiah, standing at the threshold of prophecy becoming fulfillment.

**Matthew 11:10 "This is the one about whom it is written, BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU."**

NET Matthew 11:10 This is the one about whom it is written: 'Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

GNT Matthew 11:10 ο τ ς σ τ ι ν π ε ρ ο γ γ ρ α π π α ι, δ ο γ π ο σ τ λ λ ω τ ν γ γ ε λ ν μ ο υ π ρ π ρ ο σ π ο υ σ ο υ, ς κ α τ α σ κ ε υ σ ε ι τ ν δ ν σ ο υ μ π ρ ο σ θ ν σ ο υ.

NLT Matthew 11:10 John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say, 'Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way before you.'

KJV Matthew 11:10 For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

ESV Matthew 11:10 This is he of whom it is written, "'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.'

NIV Matthew 11:10 This is the one about whom it is written: "' I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

ASV Matthew 11:10 This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, Who shall prepare thy way before thee.

CSB Matthew 11:10 This is the one it is written about: Look, I am sending My messenger ahead of You; he will prepare Your way before You.

NKJ Matthew 11:10 "For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.'

NRS Matthew 11:10 This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

YLT Matthew 11:10 for this is he of whom it hath been written, Lo, I do send My messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.

NAB Matthew 11:10 This is the one about whom it is written: 'Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you.'

NJB Matthew 11:10 he is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger in front of you to prepare your way before you.

GWN Matthew 11:10 John is the one about whom Scripture says, 'I'm sending my messenger ahead of you to prepare the way in front of you.'

BBE Matthew 11:10 This is he of whom it has been said, See, I send my servant before your face, who will make ready your way before you.

- Mt 3:3 Isa 40:3 Mal 3:1 4:5 Mk 1:2 Lu 7:26,27 Joh 1:23
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Matthew 3:3+ For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'"

Isaiah 40:3 A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

Malachi 3:1, 4+ "**Behold**, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts. 4 "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

John 1:23+ He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said."



## THE MESSENGER PREPARING FOR THE MESSIAH

This is the one about whom it is written, **BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER** ([aggelos](#)) **AHEAD OF YOU** (THE MESSIAH), **WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY** ([hodoss](#)) **BEFORE YOU** - Who is the **one**? Obviously John the baptizer is the **one** to whom Matthew refers. **Written** ([grapho](#)) is in the perfect tense signifying a past completed action (Malachi wrote down what the Spirit moved him to write - see 2Pe 1:21+) at a point in time in the past with continuation in the present, the effects of that writing enduring to Matthew's day (and to our day and to the day of eternity because Jesus said "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away." - Mt 24:35).

**TECHNICAL NOTE** - Notice NASB capitalizes texts to signify they are direct quotes from the Old Testament. No other versions have this helpful tool, another one of the reasons I still prefer the NASB, which is also the most literal of the Bible versions - [see chart](#)).

**Written** is a keyword in the book of Matthew (Mt 2:5; Mt 4:4; Mt 4:6; Mt 4:7; Mt 4:10; Mt 11:10; Mt 21:13; Mt 26:24; Mt.26:31; Mt 27:37) which is directed to a Jewish audience who should be familiar with the OT and would recognize Matthew's uses of it is written as indicating the fulfillment of those OT prophecies. Use of fulfilled OT prophecies is a great way to evangelize Jews and Gentiles who have some familiarity with the OT. Paul used this mode of evangelism repeatedly in Acts as in Acts 17:3+ "explaining and giving evidence (FROM THE OT PROPHECIES - See [Messianic Prophecy](#)) that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." (cf Acts 9:22+, Acts 18:5+) In fact to the very end of his life Paul depended on the OT Scriptures to evangelize his people, Luke recording "And when they had set a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, **from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets**, from morning until evening." (Acts 28:23+). Paul presents a pattern we should all seek to follow as we speak the Gospel to the lost, a privilege which is greatly facilitated if we have memorized relevant Messianic passages from the Old and the New Testament (see value of [Memorizing His Word](#)).

**Written** in the Gospel of Matthew Mt. 2:5; Mt. 4:4; Mt. 4:6; Mt. 4:7; Mt. 4:10; Mt. 11:10; Mt. 21:13; Mt. 26:24; Mt. 26:31; Mt. 27:37

**I SEND** ([apostello](#)) was the prophecy of John the Baptizer given by the Spirit to the prophet Malachi some 400 years earlier who wrote it down in Malachi 3:1+. Fulfilled prophecy was used by God's Spirit to save yours truly (see [My Personal Testimony of God's](#)

[Grace](#)) and continues to undergird my faith in the authenticity of the Scriptures.

**Messenger** is the Greek word [aggelos](#) which usually refers to supernatural beings (angels). In this case [aggelos](#) refers to John the Baptizer, a natural man with a supernatural message!

**Prepare** is [kataskeuazo](#) signifying that John's function was to lay the groundwork for the coming Messiah, especially calling the people to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven (aka, the King, Messiah) is at hand." (Mt 3:2+). Prepare means that the hearers of John are mentally and spiritually prepared "make ready a people **prepared** for the Lord." (Lk 1:17+). John did his job! Sadly as John the apostle writes that the Messiah then "came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But (PRAISE GOD FOR THIS TERM OF CONTRAST) as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His Name (NAME ENCOMPASSES ALL OF HIS ATTRIBUTES, ALL HIS SALVIFIC WORK, ETC.), who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:11-13+)

**David Guzik** - "We often fail to appreciate how important the preparatory work of the Lord is. Any great work of God begins with great preparation. John wonderfully fulfilled this important ministry."

**Phil Newton** - John understood his purpose, and laid down his life to follow the Lord faithfully. He would be like a comet that streaked across the sky to give warning and announcement, but faded soon in the light of the supernova of Jesus Christ. John was the last of the prophets before the Messiah. ([The Face of the Non-repentant](#))

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**Behold** ([2400](#)) [idou](#) is the second person singular aorist middle imperative of eidon which means to see, perceive, look at. In the NT [idou](#) is used as a demonstrative particle that draws attention to what follows. [idou](#) in the [middle voice](#) means "you yourself look, see, perceive!" The [aorist imperative](#) is a command emphasizing "Do it now! Don't delay!" Remember that the commands like [aorist imperative](#) call for use to depend [depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#), so be filled as you read the text (Eph 5:18+). Learn to pay attention to this word that is an "attention getter" and you will be rewarded with over 1000 opportunities (actually over 1200 uses of "behold" in the NASB 1977) to observe and meditate on what is it that the Spirit wants to direct your attention!

In 2Cor 5:17 Paul uses [idou](#), to get his reader's attention as he introduces the truth that the one who is now **in Christ** is a qualitatively new person. (see also notes above on "behold")

**Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

**Zodhiates** writes that [idou](#) is a "demonstrative particle. "Lo and behold!", serving to call attention to something external or exterior to oneself; usually used at the beginning of a clause or only with kai (and), before it, but sometimes in the mid. of a clause before words which are to be particularly noted (Mt 23:34; Lk 13:16; Acts 2:7). ([The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament. AMG](#))

**Idou** is used by the Biblical writers to (1) prompt or arouse the reader's attention (introducing something new or unusual), (2) to mark a strong emphasis ("Indeed!" Lk 13:16) and (3) to call the reader to pay close attention (very similar to #1) so that one will listen, remember or consider

Dear reader, have you experienced this "Behold" in your life? If not, then read Acts 4:12, 16:31, Romans 10:9, 10, John 1:12, 13, Ephesians 2:8,9,10 so that you too might "Behold" the glory of the risen Son in your life (see the following comment) and experience a brand new life in Christ.

**Baker** says that **behold** emphasizes the dramatic aspect of the change in [2Co 5:17](#) "as if the reader is watching it occur, **almost like observing a sunrise** (**Ed**: It is early in the morning as I write this note. I am on the Texas coast overlooking the Gulf of Mexico and the bright orange sun has literally just peeked over the distant horizon of the ocean - and my reaction was literally to stop and **behold!** And then to praise Him for His glory. [Ps 19:1](#)). One minute it is dark and hazy, the next, the sun has popped out and one "beholds" its wonder as it transforms the shimmering landscape (**Ed**: As I watch the sun slowly rise in over the ocean, the shimmering waves shout out "Glory to God in the highest!"). (Baker, W. R. 2 Corinthians. The College Press NIV commentary. Joplin, MO: College Press Pub) (Bolding added)

**Written** ([1125](#)) [grapho](#) from root [graph-](#) = primarily means to scratch on or engrave as on an ornament, reports, letters, etc; **English** = graph, graphic, etc) means to engrave or inscribe with a pen or stylus characters or letters on a surface which can be wood, wax, metal, leather, stone, parchment, dirt (John ), paper, etc. ([Click to review all 191 uses of grapho in the NAS](#))

**It is written** occurs 76 times in the **NAS**. When we were children and our parents told us to do something and we questioned "Why?", the answer was usually "Because I said so!". Why are we commanded to be holy? Because God said so! A popular saying is "God said it, I believe it, that settles it." This sounds good but isn't accurate because God's Word is true, regardless of whether we believe it or not. A more accurate "saying" would be "God said it, that settles it!" **It is written** should put a stop to every complaint or excuse. Paul is saying don't judge but remember you will appear before Me to give an account (as the next verse clarifies). This sobering thought should motivate us to obey this injunction.

The original sense of **grapho** was to carve or to engrave as deduced from uses in the Septuagint (where **grapho** occurs some 300 times usually for the Hebrew [kathab 03789](#)) such as the following...

Write ([LXX](#) = grapho) on them ([LXX](#) = lithos = stones) all the words of this law ([Deut 27:3](#))

**Send** ([649](#)) **apostello** from **apo** = from, away from + **stello** = to withdraw from, avoid) means to send off, to send forth, to send out. To send out; to commission as a representative, an ambassador, an envoy. The idea is to send forth from one place to another. But the meaning of **apostello** is more than just to send because it means "to send off on a commission to do something as one's personal representative, with credentials furnished" (Wuest) To send upon some business ([Mt. 2:16](#); [10:5](#); [20:2](#)). To send away in the sense of to dismiss ([Mk 12:3](#), [4](#)). To send or thrust forth as a sickle among corn ([Mk 4:29](#)). **Three things are true of the person sent from God.** (1) He belongs to God, who has sent him out. (2) He is commissioned to be sent out. (3) He possesses all the authority and power of God, who has sent him out. (Practical Word Studies)

**Messenger** ([32](#)) **aggelos/angelos** [*gg* in Greek is pronounced *ng*] possibly from **ago** = to bring) literally means a messenger (one who bears a message - [Lk 1:11](#), [2:9](#), etc or does an errand). Most of the NT uses refer to heavenly angels (messengers) who are supernatural, transcendent beings with power to carry out various tasks. John the Baptizer is a natural man with a supernatural message! All uses of **aggelos** that refer to angels are masculine gender (the feminine form of **aggelos** does not occur.)

**Prepare** (builder, built, construction)([2680](#)) **kataskeuazo** from **kata** = intensifies the meaning of + **skeuazo** = prepare, make ready) means to prepare, make ready, put in a state of readiness (Mk 1:2+). To build, construct, erect, create (Heb 3:3-4+, Heb 11:7+, 1 Pe 3:20+). To furnish or equip (Heb 9:2, 6+). **Kataskeuazo** means to make, construct or erect with idea of adorning and equipping with all things necessary. **Kataskeuazo** was used in the papyri with reference to the visit of a Roman senator to the Fayum. Directions are given for his welcome; "take care that at the proper places the guest-chambers be got ready." (Moulton and Milligan) **Kataskeuazo** is used 10x - builder(2), built(1), construction(1), prepare(3), prepared(4). Mt. 11:10; Mk. 1:2; Lk. 1:17; Lk. 7:27; Heb. 3:3; Heb. 3:4; Heb. 9:2; Heb. 9:6; Heb. 11:7; 1 Pet. 3:20

**Way** (road, journey)([3598](#)) **hodos** can refer to a literal road but clearly is used figuratively by Jesus to describe the course of one's conduct or behavior. **Gingrich** - way—**1. literal**—**a. as a place:** way, road, highway Mt 2:12; 3:3; Mk 10:46; Lk 8:5; Ac 8:26, 36. hodon with gen. toward Mt 4:15.—**b. as an action:** way, journey Mt 10:10; Mk 8:3; Lk 12:58; 24:35; Ac 9:27. sabbatou odos = a Sabbath day's journey Ac 1:12.—**2. figurative**—**a. way** Mt 7:13f; 10:5; Lk 1:79; Jn 14:6; Ac 2:28; 16:17; Ro 3:17.—**b. way of life or acting, conduct** Mt 21:32; Lk 20:21; Ro 11:33; Jas 5:20; Hb 3:10; 2Pe 2:21; Rev 15:3.—**c. the Way or teaching, of Christianity** Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; 1Co4:17; 2 Pt 2:2. [odometer] **Friberg** - **(1) literally;** (a) as any place along which one travels, translated according to the context: way (Mt 2.12), road (Lu 10.31), path (Mk 4.4), street (Mt 22.10), highway (Mt 4.15); (b) as an act of traveling journey, way, course (Mt 10.10); (c) in adverbial expressions: en route, on the way (Mt 5.25); along the way (Lk 10.4); literally Sabbath day's journey, i.e. about 800 meters or 2,000 paces ( Acts 1.12); day's journey (Lk 2.44); **(2) figuratively;** (a) as a manner of living and acting way of life, type of conduct (Jude 1:11); (b) as a system of doctrine, specifically Christianity the Way (Acts 24.14); (c) as a means of entering into something way (Mt 3.3; 7.13; Heb 10.20) (Borrow [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#))

## JOHN THE BAPTIST SUMMARY

### Related Resources on John the Baptist:

- G J Goldberg - [John the Baptist and Josephus](#)
- [Who was John the Baptist in the Bible?](#)
- [Was John the Baptist really Elijah reincarnated?](#) - (Excerpt click link at left for full explanation) - John did for Jesus what Elijah was to have done for the coming of the Lord, but he was not Elijah reincarnated. Jesus identified John the Baptist as Elijah, while John the Baptist rejected that identification. How do we reconcile these two teachings? There is a key phrase in Jesus' identification of John the Baptist that must not be overlooked. He says, "If you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah." In other

words, John the Baptist's identification as Elijah was not predicated upon his being the actual Elijah, but upon people's response to his role. To those who were willing to believe in Jesus, John the Baptist functioned as Elijah, for they believed in Jesus as Lord. To the religious leaders who rejected Jesus, John the Baptist did not perform this function.

- [Did John the Baptist lose his faith in Jesus as the Messiah \(Matthew 11:3; Luke 7:19\)?](#)
- [In what way was John the Baptist the greatest \(Matthew 11:11\)?](#)
- [What was the meaning and importance of the baptism of John the Baptist?](#)
- [Why did John the Baptist refer to the Pharisees as a brood of vipers?](#)
- Whyte's Dictionary of Biblical Characters - [John the Baptist](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [John the Baptist](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [John the Baptist](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [John the Baptist](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [John the Baptist](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [John the Baptist](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [John the Baptist](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [John the Baptist](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [John the baptist](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [John the Baptist](#)

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**Warren Wiersbe - John the Baptist** was a model preacher. He was a road builder who prepared the way for the Lord (Mt 3:3; Isa. 40:3), and an axman who got to the root of sin and exposed it (Mt 3:10). He was not intimidated by people, nor was he afraid to preach about judgment (Mt 3:12). He was obedient to his Lord and magnified Him in all things (John 3:30). (Borrow [With the Word](#) - excellent chapter summaries)

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**John Broadus** gives a good summary of John - **John the Baptist**.—The most probable date for the beginning of the Baptist's ministry is A. D. 26, say in the spring. (Comp. on Mt 2:19.) The name John (Johanan = Jehovah graciously gave - ED: Others say "Gift of Jehovah") had become common since the time of the popular ruler John Hyrcanus (died B. C. 106); thirteen persons of that name are mentioned in Josephus; and in the New Testament, besides the Baptist and the Evangelist, we meet with John Mark (Acts 12:12), and John of the high-priestly family. (Acts 4:6.) John the forerunner was well known to Matthew's first readers as the 'Baptist,' or Baptizer (comp. 14:2, 8); we find Josephus also ("Ant.," 18, 5, 2) mentioning him as "John, who was surnamed Baptist." This name, the Baptizer, was of course given him in consequence of the remarkable rite he performed, which attracted universal attention, and was repeatedly used as the characteristic representative of his whole work (see on Mt 21:25).—The circumstances connected with John's birth are given only by Luke. Of his history since childhood we only know that he 'was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.' (Luke 1:80<sub>±</sub>.) His father would be anxious to give to the child of such hopes the best priestly education, and it is probable that he retired to 'the deserts' after the death of his parents, who were of advanced age at the time of his birth. Such a step would be natural only when grown, or nearly so. In the wild region between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, he probably spent his time in religious meditation, ripening for his great mission. Yet that he knew human nature, and observed the men of his own time, appears from Luke 3:10–14<sub>±</sub>. In this same wild region dwelt the [Essenes](#) (see on Mt 3:7), and here also Josephus ("Life," 2) locates the teacher Banus, with whom he spent three years in seclusion, at a period about thirty years later than John's public appearance. It had been appointed (Luke 1:15<sub>±</sub>) that from the beginning of John's life he should not 'drink wine or strong drink,' i. e., should live as a Nazirite (Nu 6:1–21), implying extraordinary and lifelong consecration to God's service. A child of the mountains, and living a temperate life in the open air, he probably became strong in body, as well as 'grew strong in spirit' (Luke 1:80<sub>±</sub>.) Comp. on Mt 3:4. It is probable (see Mt 3:13) that he began his ministry when about thirty years old. **This protracted period of private discipline and preparation in the life both of Christ and his forerunner, is in striking contrast with our own impatience even under the most hurried superficial processes of education.**" (Alexander).—That a priest should be called to be a prophet was not strange; comp. Jeremiah and Ezekiel.—For a further account of John, see throughout this chapter, and on Mt 4:12; 9:14 ff.; Mt 11:2–19; Mt 14:1–13; Mt 17:10–13; Mt 21:25, 32. Köhler: "Though the historical information is very limited, there are few persons of whom we can form so clear and lively a conception.... An imposing figure, in whose posture and traits of countenance were depicted iron will, and deep, holy earnestness, yet without passing into hardness. In general, John may be called a classical example of the manifestation of love in the garb of severity. We cannot doubt his profound compassion for the unhappy condition of his people, sunken in sin and exposed to judgment, although it would hardly occur to us to conceive of him as weeping, like the Lord Jesus, over the coming fate of Jerusalem." ([Matthew 3 Commentary](#))

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A number of passages concerning John the Baptist can be somewhat enigmatic or confusing. So here is a good summary by **William Simmons**...

Apart from Jesus Christ, John the Baptist is probably the most theologically significant figure in the Gospels.

As was the case with Jesus, his birth was meticulously recorded (Luke 1:5-25+). His entrance into the world was marked by angelic proclamation and divine intervention (Luke 1:57-80). John's birth not only parallels that of Jesus, but echoes the momentous occasion of the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 17:15-22 ; 21:1-7). John is clearly a pivotal figure in the salvation history of God.

Although his formative years were lived in obscurity in the desert (Luke 1:80), his public ministry ended nearly four hundred years of prophetic silence. John was that voice crying in the wilderness preparing the way for the coming Messiah (Isaiah 40:3 ; Matthew 3:3+ ; Mark 1:2-3+; Luke 3:3-6+). In this sense his message and ministry marked the culmination of the law and the prophets, but heralded the inbreaking of the kingdom of God (Matthew 11:12 ; Luke 16:16+). So John was truly a transitional figure, forming the link between the Old and New Testaments. He spans the ages with one foot firmly planted in the Old Testament and the other squarely placed in the New.

**The central theme of his ministry was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near"** (Matthew 3:2+). He was called "The Baptist" because his practice was to baptize those who responded to the message he proclaimed and sincerely repented of their sins (Matthew 3:1+; Mark 6:14+; Luke 7:20+).

**John was an end-times prophet.** He conducted his ministry with an eschatological authority that demanded immediate action. He taught that judgment is at hand. The axe is laid to the roots and God will thoroughly purge his threshing floor (Matthew 3:10-12 ; Luke 3:9,17+). And the authenticity of repentance was evidenced in very practical terms: share with those in need, eliminate graft, and prohibit extortion (Luke 3:11-14+).

**John's lifestyle was as austere as his message.** He was an ascetic living in the wilderness, clothed in camel hair and subsisting on locusts and wild honey (Matthew 3:4+ ; Mark 1:6+). Unlike Jesus, he expected people to come to him, rather than he going to them (Matthew 3:5).

**John was no "crowd pleaser."** He willingly confronted the hypocrisy of the religious establishment (Matthew 3:7+ ; Luke 3:7+). He did not hesitate to expose the immorality of Herod and chose to die a martyr's death rather than compromise his convictions (Matthew 14:3-12 ; Mark 6:17-29+).

**All of these characteristics portray John as a fiery prophet proclaiming the apocalyptic message of God.** Indeed, Luke says that John came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17+) (ED: see [Was John the Baptist really Elijah reincarnated?](#) ). He goes on to allude to Malachi 4:5+, which states that Elijah will return "before that great and dreadful day of the Lord." In fact, some contemporaries of John inquired if he were Elijah (John 1:21+). The belief that Elijah would return and prepare the way of the Lord can be traced to [Malachi 3:1+](#), [Malachi 4:5+](#). Such belief is also found in the extra-biblical accounts (Apocrypha) of [Sirah 48:10,2](#) [Esdras 6:2 f](#). The Gospels also indicate that many believed that Elijah would come first, and then the Christ (Matthew 11:14 ; 17:10 ; Mark 6:15 ; 9:11 ; Luke 9:8+). **John flatly denied that he was Elijah reincarnated** (John 1:21,25+). Nevertheless Jesus affirmed that Elijah must come first and that he had come in the person of John the Baptist (Matthew 17:11-13 ; Mark 9:12-13). John fulfilled Malachi's prophecy in a spiritual sense, rather than in a literal way.

#### **ADDITIONAL NOTES ON JOHN'S RELATION TO ELIJAH ---**

**JOHN MACARTHUR** - The question about his being Elijah introduces some important truth. At every orthodox Passover ceremony even today a cup is reserved at the table for Elijah. At the circumcision of orthodox Jewish baby boys a chair is placed for Elijah. The anticipation is that, if Elijah would ever come and sit in the chair or drink from the cup, the Messiah's arrival would be imminent. That belief is based on Malachi 4:5-6, in which the prophet predicts, "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers."...The Elijah prophesied by Malachi was not to be a reincarnation of the ancient prophet. Rather, as the angel of the Lord told Zacharias regarding his son, John the Baptist, the prophesied forerunner would come "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17+). John would not be the ancient prophet come back to earth but would minister in much the same style and power as had Elijah. In that way, as Jesus had told the disciples at least once before, "[John] is Elijah, who was to come" (Matt. 11:14). Why then, some wonder, did John himself disclaim being Elijah? When the priests and Levites from Jerusalem asked him, "Are you Elijah?..." he said, "I am not" (John 1:21). He denied being Elijah because, though he knew of the prophecy of Luke 1, like Jesus, he realized the question was about a literal, reincarnated Elijah. And, though John did not share Jesus' omniscience, he doubtlessly also realized that the questioning of the priests and Levites originated from unbelief, not sincere faith. They were not interested in learning the truth but of finding a way to discredit John, just as

they would later seek ways to discredit the One whose way he came to prepare. (See [Matthew Commentary - Page 52](#))

**ADDITIONAL NOTE FROM HENDRIKSEN** on the meaning of **in the Spirit and power of Elijah** asking "Does this mean that John was Elijah? The answer is both **"No"** and **"Yes."** Not literally, as is clear from the fact that when John was asked, **"Are you Elijah?"** he truthfully answered, "I am not" (John 1:21<sup>±</sup>). But figuratively, so that Jesus even calls him Elijah (Mt. 11:13, 14; cf. Mt 17:12; Mark 9:12, 13). The solution is given here in Luke 1:17<sup>±</sup>: The **"spirit and power of Elijah"** was going to be clearly displayed in [John the Baptist](#). Cf. Elijah's boldness, "I have not troubled Israel but you [Ahab] have" (1 Ki 18:18), with the Baptist's (Mt. 14:4), "It isn't right for you [Herod Antipas] to have her [your brother Philip's wife Herodias]." And see also Mt. 3:7<sup>±</sup>; Lk 3:7<sup>±</sup>; Lk 3:19<sup>±</sup>. (Borrow [Baker New Testament Commentary – Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke](#))

**WARREN WIERSBE** on John like Elijah - In Mal. 4:5–6, God promised that Elijah would come before the dreadful Day of the Lord. The Jews asked John if he was Elijah and he denied it (John 1:21<sup>±</sup>). Yet, if the Jews had received their King, John would have been that Elijah (see Mt 11:14). John came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17<sup>±</sup>). John was the last of the Old Testament prophets (Luke 16:16<sup>±</sup> = "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John.") and the greatest of them (Mt. 11:7–15; Mt 17:9–13). (See [Bible Exposition Commentary - New Testament](#))

**JOHN GRASSMICK** - The presence of [Elijah](#) at the transfiguration (Mk 9:4), the confirmation of Jesus as Messiah (Mk 8:29; 9:7), and His reference to the Resurrection (Mk 9:9) suggested that the end of all things was near. If so, where was Elijah who must come first to prepare the nation spiritually for the Messiah's coming? (cf. Malachi 3:1–4; 4:5–6) Perhaps the disciples thought Elijah's work of renewal would mean the Messiah would not need to suffer. In reply, Jesus made two things clear. First, He acknowledged on the one hand that Elijah does come (lit., "is coming") first (before the Messiah) and restores ("is going to restore") all things through spiritual renewal (Mal. 4:5–6). On the other hand this does not remove the necessity for the Son of Man to suffer much and be rejected (cf. Ps. 22; Isa. 53, esp. Isa 53:3). Second, however (**but** in Greek is a strong adversative), Jesus declared that indeed **Elijah has come** already. In a veiled way Mark recorded how Jesus identified **John the Baptist** as the one who fulfilled at Jesus' First Advent the role function expected of the end-time Elijah (cf. Mark 1:2–8<sup>±</sup>; Matt. 17:13; Luke 1:17). Jesus gave **John** his true significance which John did not even recognize about himself (cf. John 1:21; Matt. 11:14). (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Gospels - Mark 9 - Page 41](#))

**LOUIS BARBIERI** - [Elijah](#) had already come in the person of John the Baptist and his ministry was not recognized. Instead of receiving John the Baptist, the religious leaders had rejected him. As they refused to acknowledge John's ministry and instead rejected him, Jesus too would be rejected. At the first announcement concerning the birth of John, Zechariah his father had been told that he would go before the Lord "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17). The Lord's earlier words concerning John (Matt. 11:14) affirmed that he would have been the predicted Elijah if the nation had responded in saving faith. Everything necessary to bring in Messiah's kingdom had been performed. The only contingency was the acceptance by the nation of her rightful King. (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Page 60](#))

**JOHN BROADUS** on John the Baptist's similarity to Elijah - It had been predicted, (Mal. 4:5 f.) that Elijah the prophet should be sent before the advent of Messiah to prepare the people for his coming. This was explained by the angel (Luke 1:17) as to be fulfilled in John, who would go before the Lord 'in the spirit and power of Elijah,' and was also declared by Jesus to have been fulfilled in John (see on 11:14; 17:10–13). The ministry of each consisted mainly in severe reproof and exhortation to amendment, and there was something appropriate to such a work in seclusion of life, with rude fare and coarse clothing, and in austerity of manner. "Even his appearance called men to repentance." (Theophylact). This was hardly personal asceticism, but appears to have been designed, like the numerous symbolical acts employed by other prophets, to attract attention, and give greater impressiveness, to the reformer's rebukes of a luxurious and worldly minded generation. It was what we call an "object-lesson." We may imagine the effect when Elijah suddenly issued from his retreats, and, arrayed like some Bedouin or savage Dervish of to-day, stood before a weak and self-indulgent king, with stern look and tone, and harsh words of merited reproof. And similar must have been the effect of John's appearance and known mode of life. (Comp. Mt 11:8.) Elijah is described as 'an hairy man' (2 Kings 1:8), literally 'a possessor of hair,' and this is best understood as meaning that he wore a garment made of hair, especially as his girdle is mentioned immediately after. This characteristic dress of Elijah appears to have been imitated by succeeding prophets; for we find in Zec 13:4 the prediction of a time when the false prophets would become ashamed

of their impostures, and would not 'wear a garment of hair to deceive.' On the part of John, these peculiarities were not a mere imitation of his prototype, for they had the same appropriateness and significance in both cases.—There is little propriety in the notion of some artists and writers that John was attenuated through much fasting. Doubtless he did fast (see on 9:14), but so did many Jews, and not necessarily to attenuation. His out-door life and homely food might (see on v. 2) even promote bodily health (compare Elijah), and physical force seems-naturally implied in his preaching to great crowds in the open air, and boldly facing the most jealous and powerful. John was also like Elijah in that he was not a writing prophet, but left his work to be recorded by others. (Pressensé). ([Commentary](#))

**In this way Jesus acknowledges the central role that John played in God's plan of salvation** He was the greatest born among women because he had the privilege of pointing to the Lamb of God (John 1:29-34+). Yet as the last great prophet of the pre-Christian era, he was the least in the kingdom of God (Matthew 11:11 ; Luke 7:28+).

**John fully accepted his subordinate role to Christ.** He denied that he was the Christ and repeatedly emphasized that he was simply a witness to the Light (John 1:19-23+; cf. also John 1:6-9+ ; John 3:27-30+ ). John stated that Jesus was greater than he, and that Jesus had a more powerful ministry and baptism (Mark 1:7-8 ; Luke 3:16+ ; John 1:26-27+). He did not want to baptize Jesus, but rather desired to be baptized by Jesus (Matthew 3:13-14). John allowed his disciples to leave his own leadership and follow after Jesus (John 1:35-39+).

**But for all of his greatness, John was merely human.** In this sense he too joined in the popular speculations about the identity of Christ. It may be that John's vision of the Messiah varied so much from what he heard and saw in Jesus, that he came to question if Jesus were really the Christ (Matthew 11:1-2 ; Luke 7:1+). The fact that Jesus was not an ascetic, and that he actively sought the fellowship of publicans and sinners may have been an offense to John and his disciples (Matthew 9:9-17 ; Matthew 11:18-19 ; Luke 7:33-34+). Jesus may have rebuked John in this regard when he said, "Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me" (Matthew 11:6 ; Luke 7:23+).

**Finally, even though John was merely a witness serving as a transitional figure, the impact of his life and ministry should not be underestimated.** During his lifetime he had a following of disciples who shared common practices such as fasting and prayers (Matthew 9:14 ; John 1:35-37+ ; Jn 4:1-2+). John's disciples survived his death and spread throughout the Mediterranean world. Apollos was from Alexandria in North Africa and at one point knew only of the baptism of John (Acts 18:24-25 ). Similarly, upon arriving in Ephesus, Paul encountered about a dozen disciples of John. They too had only experienced the baptism of John (Acts 19:1-7). **These instances indicate that the Baptist's movement may have had more influence than what we are able to glean from the New Testament....**

In conclusion, John the Baptist is of great theological importance in the New Testament. He ended nearly four hundred years of prophetic silence and paved the way for the Messiah. In the spirit of Elijah, he preached a message of repentance and baptism. In his darkest hour he questioned if Jesus was the One who was to come, or whether there would be another. He inaugurated a spiritual movement that had influence long after his death and extended throughout the Mediterranean world. ([Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#))

**Matthew 11:11 "Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.**

NET Matthew 11:11 "I tell you the truth, among those born of women, no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is.

GNT Matthew 11:11 μ ν λ γ ω μ ν · ο κ γ γερται ν γεννητο ς γυναικ ν με ζων ω ννου το βαππιστο · δ μικρ τερος ν τ βασιλε τ ν ο ραν ν με ζων α το σπιν.

NLT Matthew 11:11 "I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is!

KJV Matthew 11:11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

ESV Matthew 11:11 Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

NIV Matthew 11:11 I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

ASV Matthew 11:11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

CSB Matthew 11:11 " I assure you: Among those born of women no one greater than John the Baptist has appeared, but the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

NKJ Matthew 11:11 "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

NRS Matthew 11:11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

YLT Matthew 11:11 Verily I say to you, there hath not risen, among those born of women, a greater than John the Baptist, but he who is least in the reign of the heavens is greater than he.

NJB Matthew 11:11 'In truth I tell you, of all the children born to women, there has never been anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.

- born - Job 14:1,4 15:14 25:4 Ps 51:5 Eph 2:3
- a greater - Mt 3:11 1Sa 2:30 Lu 1:15 7:28 Joh 5:35
- he that - Mt 5:19 Isa 30:26 Zec 12:8 Lu 9:48 Joh 1:15,27 3:30 1Co 6:4 1Co 15:9 Eph 3:8
- greater - Joh 7:39 10:41 Ro 16:25,26 Col 1:26,27 2Ti 1:10 Heb 11:40 1Pe 1:10
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Proverbs 27:2 Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips.

### NO OLD TESTAMENT SAINT GREATER THAN JOHN

Truly ([amen](#) - emphasizing importance of following) **I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen ([egeiro](#)) anyone greater than John the Baptist ([baptistes](#))!** - The phrase **born of women** was a Jewish idiom that spoke of anyone born into the human race (for all are born of women). Why was John the greatest? In Mt 11:9 Jesus said he was more than a prophet. In Mt 11:10 He said John was the one who prepared the way for the Messiah. The most reasonable answer is because he had the greatest privilege of any human being up to that time. He was privileged to be the forerunner of the Messiah, a position no other person had held or could hold.

**John MacArthur** explains John's superior greatness this way - He was the greatest human being who had lived until that time. From an earthly perspective, John's character and calling made him the greatest man yet born besides Jesus Himself. In superior qualities as a human being, John was unequalled. (See [Matthew Commentary - Page 255](#))

*We see the compassion of Christ even for struggling saints....*

*Clouds of doubt may arise but Jesus Christ melts them away.*

-- [Phil Newton](#)

**THOUGHT** - What an encouraging passage this is. Why so? If the greatest man to ever live up to that time had doubts about Jesus, then every believer can take comfort in his doubting! In other words, doubting does not mean we are lesser disciples because we doubt. While John's role was the greatest under the Old Covenant, those of us who come after Christ's death and resurrection experience the fullness of salvation (the New Covenant in His blood and God's gift of the indwelling Spirit) enjoy an even greater privilege.

**Yet the one who is least in the kingdom ([basileia](#)) of heaven ([ouranos](#)) is greater than he** - John is regarded as outside the **kingdom of heaven**. Those **in the kingdom of heaven** describe every person who has been born again and entered into the New Covenant. Why is every believer **greater** than John? For one thing believers are now in the Kingdom, a Kingdom John was only privileged to announce as arriving. Every believer is now in Christ and clothed with His righteousness, and thus has a position that John did not have.

**John MacArthur** explains that "the people misunderstand the nature of John's greatness, Jesus added, **yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he**. Although he was a spiritual giant among men, John's unique greatness was in his role in human history, not in his spiritual inheritance, in which he would be equal to every believer. Therefore, **the least in the kingdom of heaven**, the spiritual dimension, **is greater than he**, that is, than anyone in the human dimension, including John." (See [Matthew Commentary - Page 255](#))

**William MacDonald** - The statement that "**he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he**" proves that Jesus was speaking of John's privilege, not his character. A person **who is least in the kingdom of heaven** does not necessarily have a better character than John, but he does have **greater** privilege. To be a citizen of the kingdom is greater than to announce its arrival. John's privilege was great in preparing the way for the Lord, but he did not live to enjoy the blessings of the kingdom. ([Believer's Bible Commentary page 1242 - borrow](#))

**Michael Andrus on the one who is least** - Jesus is not denigrating John at all but highlighting the amazing privilege it is to be a part of the kingdom He came to establish, whose first phase is the Church. John belongs to the time of promise; we belong to the time of fulfillment. John is a servant; we are sons. John is the friend of the bridegroom; we are the Bride. As great as John is, it is greater to participate in the kingdom than to announce it. ([When God Sits on His Hands](#))

[Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#) on **the one who is least** - those who had responded to the announcement and were now in the circle of Jesus' followers were the nucleus of His kingdom. They were being given new truths and privileges, and after national rejection of Jesus, would be baptized into a new spiritual body, the Church (a part of the Messianic kingdom, Col 1:13; Rev 20:6). John was the friend of the bridegroom, but the disciples became the bride (Jn 3:29). When Jesus spoke these words (before Pentecost, Acts 2:1-4), **kingdom of heaven** was the most intelligible term he could have used.

**David Lowery on the one who is least** - No human could hold a more exalted place in history than that occupied by John as forerunner of the Messiah. Yet human greatness is easily eclipsed by the blessings of divine grace. John's exalted status is compared to that of the most insignificant member of the kingdom of heaven. All who heed John's message (as he himself certainly did, cf. 3:14-15) and welcome Jesus and his disciples (10:40) enjoy a relationship with God that makes all human achievement pale by comparison. ([Bible Knowledge Key Word Study](#))

**Louis Barbieri** - The privileges of Jesus' disciples sharing in the kingdom will be far greater than anything anyone could experience on earth. (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Page 44](#))

*"If praise is to be measured by the lips which pronounce it,  
then never was man so praised as was John the Baptist."*

--Clarence Macartney

**Vance Havner** - the humblest believer in the age of grace is greater, in point of privilege, than John who lived under law. The difference is in position, not a matter of moral worth.

*The least in the gospel stands on higher ground  
than the greatest under the law.*

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - Jesus sets John in a very high position, and we know that his judgment is true. Up till the coming of our Lord, John was greatest of woman born; but the new dispensation was on a higher plane, for "the kingdom of heaven" was set up. As we may say, as a rule, that the darkest day is lighter than the brightest night; so John, though first of his own order, is behind the last of the new or gospel order. The least in the gospel stands on higher ground than the greatest under the law. How privileged are we who, by virtue of entering into the kingdom of heaven by faith, are made to see, and hear, and enjoy those things which even the prophet of prophets could not enter upon! We may rest assured that there is nothing better to be discovered or revealed than that heavenly kingdom into which our Lord and King has brought us.

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**QUESTION** - [In what way was John the Baptist the greatest?](#)

**ANSWER** - In a discourse about [John the Baptist](#), Jesus honored the prophet with these words: "Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11a). John certainly did not see himself as "great"—he did not see himself as worthy enough to baptize Jesus (Matthew 3:13–14) or even to carry His sandals (Matthew 3:11).

The "greatness" that Jesus refers to concerning John has to do with John's unique position in history, not with any special talent, holiness, or personal merit. In fact, immediately after stating that John is the greatest "among those born of women," Jesus says, "Yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11b). More on this paradox later.

One reason that Jesus called John the Baptist the "greatest" was that John held the honor of being chosen by God as the forerunner

to the Messiah. John's mission was to personally prepare the world for Christ's arrival. John's ministry was predicted in Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1. After Jesus came, John introduced Him to the world as the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world (John 1:35–36). John was the herald who introduced to the world the Hero of all history. It was this introduction that accredited Jesus before the Jewish crowds and leaders, some of whom believed on Jesus, and many of whom did not.

John was also the "greatest" in that he preached with the power of Elijah (Luke 1:17; 3:7–18). John shared many qualities with [Elijah](#), including calling a nation to repentance, rebuking the king, and persevering in the face of public misunderstanding and malicious persecution (Matthew 11:16–18; Mark 6:14–19).

John was also the "greatest" in that God had chosen him to break the [430 years of divine silence](#) that had existed since the prophet Malachi. John was the Spirit-anointed bridge from the Old Testament to the New. John was the last of the Old Testament prophets and stood on the cusp of a new dispensation. His preaching was the end of the Law and the beginning of the Promise. He was the last in the long line of prophets who predicted Christ, yet he was the only one who could actually see Christ in the flesh. Moses, Isaiah, and the rest of the prophets had pointed to a far-distant personage they could see only faintly. John pointed at an actual human being who stood directly in front of him. No other prophet had that privilege.

Jesus' full statement in Matthew 11:11 is paradoxical: "Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." How can John be the greatest, if even the "least in the kingdom" is greater than John? Again, the answer has to do with the Christian's unique position in history, not with his personal merit. John died without seeing the fullness of God's plan in Christ (see Mark 6:17–29). John never saw the crucifixion of Christ or His glorious resurrection. Yet even the "least in the kingdom of heaven" knows of these events and understands their meaning.

The baptism of John was insufficient to save (see Acts 18:24–26; 19:1–7). The [disciples of John in Ephesus](#) needed to hear the whole gospel, not just what John had taught. They needed to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, the one John had predicted. They needed the baptism of the Holy Spirit. John was truly the greatest prophet of his era—the Old Testament time—yet all Christians today have a fuller perspective on the work of Christ.

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[Sammy Burgess](#) I heard about a preacher that said to his wife, "You know honey there is not many great preachers in our day." She smiled and said, "No, and there's one less than you think." People that are always bragging on themselves can be a bit obnoxious.

I think about this Texan that landed in Sydney, Australia. He was picked up by a taxi and no sooner got in when he started on this tirade about the small town airport and how in Texas they have larger runways on their ranches. \*When they crossed the Sydney Harbor Bridge, the Texan grumbled, "I have a duck pond bigger than that harbor and a bridge across it that makes this one look like a toy."

When they got onto the Sydney-Newcastle Expressway he complained; "Is this a road or a track?" Through it all, the driver said nothing but when a kangaroo jumped out in front of the cab causing him to slam on the breaks, he couldn't help himself and hollered, "Stupid grass-hoppers!"....

Some may brag on themselves and others may seek the praises of men, but when it is all said and done, the only thing that matters is what the Lord thinks and says about us. The only praise we should desire or seek is the Lord's.

The story is told that when the Italian composer [Verdi](#) produced his first opera in Florence, at the completion the crowd stood to their feet and cheered. Yet his eyes were not on the cheering crowd, but fastened on the face of one man in the audience - the great [Rossini](#). It mattered not if the people were cheering or jeering him. What mattered was what the master musician thought.

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### **James Hastings - John and the Jews - Mt 11:11**

EVERYTHING that we are told of John the Baptist is unique. The asceticism of his life in the desert, the startling message with which he broke the silence maintained by the spirit of prophecy for four hundred years, the incorruptible sincerity of his humility, out of which no allurements could bribe him, the fearless honesty of his words, and the tragic horror of his death—all combine to give him a peculiar and distinctive place on the page of Scripture. But these things were, after all, only the indications and accompaniments of the singularity of his official position; for he stands alone among the servants of God. He came, no doubt, in the spirit and power of Elijah, and his dress is not the only thing about him that reminds us of the prophet of Gilead; but yet, take him for all in all, there is no one to whom he can be properly compared. He stood between the Jewish and the Christian dispensations, having much that connected him with both, and yet belonging exclusively to neither. He had more knowledge of the nature of the person and work of the Messiah than any of his predecessors among the prophets, and yet "he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (EXCERPT - [SEE FULL ARTICLE BELOW](#))

Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. Matthew 11:11

The Bible record is very plain when it assures us that John the Baptist was a man sent from God.

Our generation would probably decide that such a man ought to be downright proud of the fact that God had sent him. We would urge him to write a book. Seminary leaders would line up to schedule him as guest lecturer.

Actually, John the Baptist would never have fit into the contemporary religious scene in our day—never! He did not keep his suit pressed. He was not careful about choosing words that would not offend. He did not quote beautiful passages from the poets. The doctors of psychiatry would have quick advice for him: “John, you really need to get adjusted to the times and to society!” Adjust. That is a modern word I have come to hate. It was never an expression used to speak about human beings until we forgot that man has a soul. Now we have weird guys with mental “screwdrivers” adjusting one person a little tighter and another a little looser. John needed no adjustment. He gladly stepped down so that all eyes could turn to Jesus, the Lamb of God!

**Matthew 11:12 “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.**

BGT Matthew 11:12 π ὁ τ ν μερ ν ω ννου το βαππιστο ως ρτι βασιλε α τ ν ο ραν ν βι ζεται κα βιαστα ρπ ζουσι ν α τ ν.

KJV Matthew 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

NET Matthew 11:12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and forceful people lay hold of it.

CSB Matthew 11:12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been suffering violence, and the violent have been seizing it by force.

ESV Matthew 11:12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.

NIV Matthew 11:12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.

NLT Matthew 11:12 And from the time John the Baptist began preaching until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and violent people are attacking it.

NRS Matthew 11:12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.

NJB Matthew 11:12 Since John the Baptist came, up to this present time, the kingdom of Heaven has been subjected to violence and the violent are taking it by storm.

NAB Matthew 11:12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force.

YLT Matthew 11:12 'And, from the days of John the Baptist till now, the reign of the heavens doth suffer violence, and violent men do take it by force,

GWN Matthew 11:12 From the time of John the Baptizer until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful people have been seizing it.

- from - Mt 21:23-32 Lu 7:29,30 13:24 16:16 Joh 6:27 Eph 6:11-13 Php 2:12
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Luke 16:16+ “The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.

## KINGDOM OF GOD ADVANCING & ATTACKED

**From the days of John the Baptist** ([baptistes](#)) **until** ([heos](#)) **now the kingdom** ([basileia](#)) **of heaven** ([ouranos](#)) **suffers violence** ([biazo](#) - present tense) **and violent** (*biastes* = one who uses force, impetuous, used only here in NT) **men take it by force** ([harpazo](#) - present tense active voice) - The **NLT** and the NIV incorporate both common interpretations (see discussion of these below), the **NLT** rendering it "And from the time John the Baptist began preaching until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing (POSITIVE SENSE), and violent people are attacking it (NEGATIVE SENSE)." The NLT rendering makes the point that one needs to be careful in basing one's interpretation on a given Bible translation (see also [Lowery's comment below](#)), especially a paraphrase like the NLT (which love to look at on many passages) and instead base the interpretation on a more literal translation (NAS, ESV, CSB, NET, etc).

*Following the Lord demands earnest endeavor, untiring energy, and the utmost exertion.*

*To be a Christian is to swim against the flow of the world, to go against its grain*

**John MacArthur** has a lengthy comment on the two interpretations and ends up favoring the positive interpretation - The **kingdom of heaven** refers to God's general rule, His will for and His work with mankind, especially His chosen people, the Jews. It represents His purpose, message, principles, laws, and activities relating to mankind—all of which had been associated with some form of violence since John began preaching. The form of [biazo](#) (from which **suffers violence** comes) can be read as either a Greek passive or middle voice. (**ED: FIRST INTERPRETATION**) As a **passive**, it would carry the idea of being oppressed or treated violently, which would indicate that violence is brought on the **kingdom of heaven** by those outside of it. The Pharisees and scribes had attacked John verbally, and Herod had attacked him physically. The **kingdom** was being violently denied and rejected; and because it was being rejected in its spiritual dimension, the **kingdom** would not come in its earthly, millennial dimension. Soon the enemies of the **kingdom** would kill not only John but even the Messiah Himself. They would destroy both the herald and the King. (**ED: SECOND INTERPRETATION**) In the **middle voice** the verb carries the active idea of applying force or of entering forcibly—in which case the translation would be, "*The kingdom of heaven is vigorously pressing itself forward, and people are forcefully entering it.*" With its focus in John the Baptist, the kingdom moved relentlessly through the godless, sin-darkened human system that opposed it. **The first of those two interpretations is negative and the second is positive; but both are true.** (**ED: THIS IS THE INTERPRETATION CONVEYED BY THE NLT**) As already seen, the negative is illustrated by the persecution of John. The positive is illustrated by the many people that John's preaching led to the Lord, just as the angel predicted: "*He will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*" Luke 1:16-17. Although both interpretations are possible and true, **the second seems preferable in the context.** Jesus had already taught that the few who enter the **kingdom** do so by first finding and then entering the narrow gate and walking the narrow way (Matt. 7:13-14). He also said that citizenship in His **kingdom** requires denying self, taking up one's cross, and following Him (Matt 16:24; cf. 10:38). Following the Lord demands earnest endeavor, untiring energy, and the utmost exertion. To be a Christian is to swim against the flow of the world, to go against its grain, because the adversary—Satan, his demons, and the world system—are extremely powerful. Those who enter the **kingdom** of grace through faith in Christ do so with great effort through the sovereign power of the convicting and converting Holy Spirit. (See [Matthew Commentary - Page 256](#))

**D A Carson** combines the negative and positive interpretations (see MacArthur above) - The best solution is to take the verb ([biazo](#)) in its most likely voice, middle deponent, and the noun and verb of the last clause with their normal evil connotations: viz., from the time of John the Baptist (as explained above) until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing; and violent or rapacious men have been trying (conative present) to plunder it....Now, Jesus goes on to say, from the days of the Baptist—i.e., from the beginning of Jesus' ministry—the kingdom has been forcefully advancing (the point also made in Luke 16:16) (POSITIVE INTERPRETATION). But it has not swept all opposition away, as John expected (see Mt 11:2–4). Simultaneous with the kingdom's advance have been the attacks of violent men on it (NEGATIVE INTERPRETATION). That is the very point John could not grasp. Now Jesus expressly affirms it. The statement is general because it does not refer to just one kind of opposition. It includes Herod's imprisonment of John (cf. J.A.T. Robinson, *Twelve*, pp. 44–45), the attacks by Jewish leaders now intensifying (Mt 9:34; 12:22–24), the materialism that craved a political Messiah and the prosperity he would bring but not his righteousness (Mt 11:20–24) (See [Matthew](#))

**Louis Barbieri** favors the NEGATIVE INTERPRETATION - But the kingdom had been subject to violence and evil men were trying to take it by force (Matt. 11:12). The religious leaders of Jesus' day (forceful men) were resisting the movement introduced by John, Jesus, and the apostles. Forcefully advancing (*biazetai*) could be rendered in the passive, "is violently treated." (The verb lay hold of [*harpazousin*] means "to grasp" in the sense of resisting or laying claim to it on their own). Those leaders wanted a kingdom, but not the kind Jesus was offering. So they were resisting the message and attempting to establish their own rule. (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Page 44](#))

**David Lowery** favors the NEGATIVE INTERPRETATION- Suffers violence (biazetai)-This saying could be **positive** (cf. Luke 16:16) and translated "forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it" (NIV), **positive and negative** ("forcefully advancing, and violent people attack it" NLT) or **negative** (NET, NASB, NRSV, NKJV): "violent men have been trying to take over the kingdom of heaven by force" (CEV). Two reasons lend support to a **negative** translation. First, in general the word is "most often used in the unfavorable sense of attack or forcible constraint" (BDAG, 175; BAGD, 140-41). Second, the preceding context has warned disciples about fearful opposition (e.g., Mt 10:16-39) which will soon be graphically illustrated in the death of John the Baptist (Mt 14:1-12)-the lauded character of the immediate context (Mt 11:7-19). There is no guarantee the term is used in the same way in Matthew and Luke as the contexts differ. [\[biazo\]](#) ([Bible Knowledge Key Word Study](#))

*Lord, wake us up! Suffer us not to be using dead formality,  
where living violence can alone avail.*

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - John had aroused an unusual earnestness which had not died out. Men were eager for the glories of "the kingdom of heaven." Though they misinterpreted it, they were on fire to seize it. John himself, in his excess of eagerness, had sent his two disciples to our Lord with an impatient question. Our Savior does not blame his intense enquiry; but says that so it must be. A holy violence had been introduced by John, and they had just seen it in his question, and our Lord would have all those who would obtain the kingdom capture it by the same passionate eagerness. The time was come to end indifference, and put on a holy resolution as to the things of God. Thus the King sets forth the spirit demanded in these who would take part and lot in his great cause and kingdom. Lord, wake us up! Suffer us not to be using dead formality, where living violence can alone avail.

**NET NOTE** - NET = "has suffered violence, and forceful people lay hold of it." - Or "the kingdom of heaven is forcibly entered and violent people take hold of it." For a somewhat different interpretation of this passage, see the note on the phrase "urged to enter in" in Luke 16:16. (NOTE on Lk 16:16 = "Many translations have "entereth violently into it" (ASV) or "is forcing his way into it" (NASB, NIV). This is not true of everyone. It is better to read the verb here as passive rather than middle, and in a softened sense of "be urged." See Gen 33:11; Judg 13:15-16; 19:7; 2 Sam 3:25, 27 in the LXX. This fits the context well because it agrees with Jesus' attempt to persuade his opponents to respond morally. For further discussion and details, see D. L. Bock, Luke (BECNT), 2:1352-53. "

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**Suffers violence** (971)([biazo](#) from **bia** = violence) means to overpower, impel, but also to rush into. To use or apply force, to inflict violence on. As noted above, in the [middle voice](#) the idea is to overpower or apply force and in the [passive voice](#) the idea is to urge, strongly urge or constrain. The only other use of [biazo](#) is in Lk 16:16). We see these 2 main senses (apply force versus strongly urge) in the uses in the Septuagint (Ge 33:11; Ex 19:24; Dt. 22:25; 22:28; Jdg. 13:15-16; 19:7; 2 Sa 13:25; 13:27; Est. 7:8)

**Darrell Bock** in his comments on use of **BIAZO in Luke 16:16** writes - We turn, then, to the meaning of βιάζω, the basic sense of which is "to apply force." Several interpretations have been proposed for this term (Leaney 1958: 223-24; Cortés and Gatti 1987 [on options 1, 3, and 4 ]; BAGD 140-41; BAA 280-81):

**1. The term is negative and in the middle voice** "all act violently against it"; that is, the kingdom is subject to universal opposition (Ellis 1974: 203 mentions demonic forces). This view reflects a linkage to Matthew, since in the Matthean passage the force is clearly negative.<sup>16</sup> In this negative light, the world—and everything in it—stands opposed to the kingdom. But such a pessimistic view is not likely for Luke, since Jesus has gathered some disciples, and in 2:34-35 he divides people, rather than being opposed by them all. Arndt (1956: 361) qualifies this view by suggesting that the entry is not necessarily violent, but neither is it always pursued on God's terms. This refinement is possible, but if rejection were the dominant image, one would still expect a contrastive particle countering the earlier positive reference to preaching. However, only καί (kai, and) appears.

**2. The term is negative and should be translated:** "everyone forces his way into it"; that is, people try to violently bring the kingdom to earth. Such a remark by Jesus is seen as a criticism of the Zealot movements (Luce 1933: 266 calls this view "attractive"). Against this view is the supposed juxtaposition of kingdom preaching and political criticism without any use of a contrastive conjunction, not to mention the almost complete absence of explicit political critique in every portrayal of Jesus.<sup>17</sup> If Jesus ever took on Zealots or people like them, this is the only place he did so.

**3. The term is positive and in the middle voice:** "everyone" tries to force his way into it [the kingdom]" (Hendriksen 1978: 774; Manson 1949: 134-35; Schrenk, TDNT 1:612; Klostermann 1929: 167; Marshall 1978: 630 [apparently]). The problem with this approach is that it is entirely too positive. Jesus has faced severe opposition in every period of his ministry. And only in this context does Jesus rebuke the Pharisees' scoffing. In Jesus' view, they are hardly pressing to enter the kingdom.

4. The verb has a softened force and is in the passive voice “all are urged insistently to come in” (Schweizer 1984: 258; Fitzmyer 1985: 1117).<sup>18</sup> This view fits remarkably well in the current context. Why is Jesus warning and exhorting his opponents so constantly? Because he is attempting to persuade them to respond morally. In a sense, his mission is bound up in his proclamation to and effort toward those most opposed to him, those on the road to rejection. The opportunity is always placed before them. The risk is always expressed to them. Indeed, the special nature of the time creates the urgency. People may think that they can take or leave the kingdom message, but the warnings are necessary because the message will take or leave them, depending on how they respond. Thus the need to urge insistently. Jesus presents the message to all, and all are given the chance to enter and share in the kingdom’s benefits (14:15–24 is similar in thrust). The time of fulfillment has come and all are invited to share in the good news. The kingdom comes, regardless of whether one responds. But if one is to share in the kingdom message, one must respond to Jesus’ authority—not scoff at it (16:14). (See [Luke : 2 Volumes Baker Exegetical Commentary](#))

**Take by force** (726) **harpazo** from **haireô** = take, in NT only in **middle voice** = **haireomai** = to take for oneself, to choose; akin to **airo** = to raise up) means to snatch up or way, to seize or seize upon, to steal (see comparison to *klepto* below), to catch away or up, to pluck, to pull. **Harpazo** means to take suddenly and vehemently, often with violence and speed or quickly and without warning. The idea is to take by force with a sudden swoop and usually indicates a force which cannot be resisted. In eschatological terms (future events, prophetically related) as in the present verse, **harpazo** refers to what is often known as the “rapture” (Latin = *raptura* = seizing or Latin = *rapio* = seize, snatch) **Harpazo** conveys the idea of force suddenly exercised, and also well rendered by the English verb to **snatch** (to seize, take or grasp something {someone} abruptly or hastily with emphasis on the idea of suddenness or quickness)

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**Spurgeon** - “Frequently complaints are made and surprise expressed by individuals who have never found a blessing rest upon anything they have attempted to do in the service of God. ‘I have been a Sunday-school teacher for years,’ says one, ‘and I have never seen any of my girls or boys converted.’ No, and the reason most likely is you have never been violent about it; you have never been compelled by the Divine Spirit to make up your mind that converted they should be, and no stone should be left unturned until they were. You have never been brought by the Spirit to such a passion, that you have said, ‘I cannot live unless God bless me. I cannot exist unless I see some of these children saved.’ Then, falling on your knees in agony of prayer, and putting forth afterwards your trust with the same intensity towards heaven, you would never have been disappointed, ‘for the violent take it by force.’”

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#### **Walter Kaiser - Forcefully into the Kingdom? [See page 444 Hard Sayings of the Bible](#)**

Matthew (Mt 11:12) and Luke (Lk 16:16) appear to present us here with two versions of one and the same original saying. We have to try to determine what each of the two versions means in the context in which either Evangelist has placed it; then, if possible, we have to determine what the original saying meant in the context of Jesus’ ministry.

Both versions agree on this: the ministry of John the Baptist was an epoch marking the end of one age and the approach of a new. “All the prophets and the law prophesied until John” (Mt 11:13 RSV). John himself belonged rather to the old age than to the new. He is viewed as being the last and greatest of the “goodly fellowship of the prophets”; while he was the herald of the new order he did not actually participate in it. When his public ministry was forcibly ended by his imprisonment, that was the signal for Jesus to embark on his ministry in Galilee, with the proclamation that the kingdom of God had drawn near.

“Since that time,” says Jesus in Luke’s version of his words, “the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached.” That was a statement of fact, which his hearers must have recognized. But in what sense is everyone forcing his way into it, or “enter[ing] it violently” (RSV)?

Luke includes his version in a series of sayings inserted between the story of the dishonest steward and the story of the rich man and Lazarus and linked together by the general theme of law. “Everyone forces his way in,” says the NEB; the TEV has the same wording. This might suggest something like a universal gate-crashing, which does not tally too well with some other sayings of Jesus on the relative few who will enter the kingdom, such as “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door; because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to” (Lk 13:24; Mt 7:13–14). But perhaps the meaning is “Everyone who enters must force his way in,” which implies the same kind of determined and vigorous action as “Make every effort to enter” or “Strive to enter” (RSV). So far as the Lukan version of the saying goes, this could well be its meaning. It was no doubt this interpretation of it that moved an eighteenth-century hymn-writer to say, in language which probably sounded less strange in his contemporaries’ ears than it does in ours:

O may thy mighty word  
Inspire each feeble worm

To rush into thy kingdom, Lord,  
And take it as by storm!

But Matthew's version now demands our attention. Where Luke says, "The good news of the kingdom of God is being preached," Matthew says, "The kingdom of heaven has suffered violence." But there is an ambiguity in the particular form of the Greek verb in this clause; it may have passive force, meaning "has been treated with violence" or "has been suffering violence," or it may have intransitive force, meaning "has been acting violently" or "has been forcing its way in." It could be said in favor of this last interpretation that in the ministry of Jesus the kingdom of heaven was on the march, taking the field against the forces of evil that held the souls and bodies of men and women in bondage. The mighty works that were an essential part of his ministry were the "powers of the age to come" invading the present age and establishing a beach-head on its territory that was destined to expand until nothing of the old order was left.

*If the passive force of the verb be preferred, then Jesus says that from the time of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven has been violently attacked.*

If the passive force of the verb be preferred, then Jesus says that from the time of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven has been violently attacked. This meaning too could fit the setting of the words. Matthew records them among several of Jesus' sayings about John (including the description of him as unsurpassed among those born of women), which he appends to the incident of John's messengers who were sent to question Jesus. It could be said that the imprisonment of John the Baptist (with his ensuing execution) was one instance of a violent attack on the kingdom of heaven by forces opposed to it—whether one thinks of human forces or demonic forces using men as their instruments. Further attacks were to be experienced until they reached their climax in the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus himself. The same meaning could be attached to the following clause: "and men of violence take it by force" or "men of violence seize it." In that case, the two clauses say very much the same thing.

But the "men of violence" need not be those who violently attacked the kingdom which Jesus proclaimed. There were other "men of violence" around at the time—those who came to be known as the party of the Zealots. They were passionately devoted to the bringing in of the kingdom of God, but their methods were clearly contrary to those which Jesus practiced and recommended. The kingdom of God, as they understood it, was a new order in which the Jewish people would live in freedom from Gentile rule, subject to no king but the God of their fathers. This new order could be introduced only by the forcible expulsion of the occupying Roman power from Judea. Many of Jesus' hearers could remember the revolt of one such "man of violence," Judas the Galilean, in A.D. 6. That revolt was crushed by the Romans, but the spirit which inspired it lived on. It could be said that men of this outlook were trying to take the kingdom of God by force, and on the whole it seems most probable that Jesus was referring to them.

Matthew's wording, then, seems to mean that, despite the setback which the cause of God might have seemed to suffer by the imprisonment of John the Baptist, his kingdom has in reality been advancing irresistibly ever since. Men of violence may attempt to speed its progress by armed force, but that is not the way in which its triumph will be assured.

When Luke's account and Matthew's are compared, it appears that Matthew's wording is more relevant to the immediate circumstances of Jesus' ministry, while Luke's wording generalizes the application of the saying, showing how its principle continued to work itself out in the worldwide proclamation and progress of the gospel. The good news was still being made known, and it still called for courage and resolution to enter the kingdom of God.

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### **Norman Geisler - [When Critics Ask](#)**

MATTHEW 11:12—How can God's sovereign and peaceful kingdom be entered by force?

**PROBLEM:** Paul declared that the kingdom (rule) of God is "peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). However, Matthew says "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." How can one enter God's kingdom by force?

**SOLUTION:** This is a difficult passage, and it has been interpreted several ways. Some take it to mean that the kingdom is violently taken by its enemies. That is, the forceful religious leaders of Jesus' day were resisting the kingdom introduced by John. They wanted a kingdom, but not the kind that was being offered by John and Jesus (cf. Ro 10:3). However, some object that this is opposed to the context that is expressing the greatness of John the Baptist and the contrast between his day and Christ's.

Others see the "violence" as a figure of speech meaning, first, that the kingdom breaks through or intrudes itself with great power and abruptness. Then, the intense endeavors of people who on the preaching of John were taking the kingdom by storm. On this view, it is speaking of the response to John's preaching as a great popular uprising, a storming of the kingdom of God by people rushing with eagerness to get in it with a violent zeal. This explains the use of the term "violence" and fits the overall context.

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### **James Smith - POSSESSION BY FORCE**

“And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven is gotten by force, and the violent take it by force” (Matt. 11:12).

Introduction. At first sight this verse seems somewhat hard to understand. Weymouth renders it, “But from the time of John the Baptist till now, the Kingdom of the Heavens has been suffering violent assault, and the violent have been seizing it by force.” If this verse means anything, it means possession by force. But is that correct? “I thought the trustful soul secured by faith the Kingdom?” That is true, but what is faith?

“Faith is a living power from Heaven  
Which grasps the promise God has given.”

This text really eulogises intense earnestness. It is quite true that earnestness without faith cannot secure the Kingdom, yet it is equally true to say that faith and violence are inseparably connected. Indeed, faith is a force to be reckoned with.

### **I. John’s Hearers Became Violent, or intensely earnest.**

It is quite evident that our Lord by these words is describing the intense earnestness of the hearers of John the Baptist. Aroused by the trumpet-call to repentance, vast multitudes eagerly received John’s teaching, and pressed forward to enjoy the benefits. This statement is really our Lord’s commendation of the success of John’s preaching. No preaching is of real practical value unless it leads the hearers to press forward and take the Kingdom by force.

### **II. Easy Going Age.**

This is an easy going age. “Short and easy methods” are the rule of to-day. This modern craze has invaded the religious realm.

Samuel Rutherford has a remark applicable to-day: “Many are blinded in rejoicing in a good cheap conversion that never cost them a sick night.” What he objected to was the desire of many for a salvation without a sigh or tear, without a sleepless night. True, “Weeping will not save me,” but it proves you are repentant, and a fit subject to be saved. Oh, if we see ourselves as God does, it will rend our hearts. Are we right in denouncing old methods of leading sinners to Christ. Remember, easy got, easy go.

### **III. A Rewarder of them that Diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6)**

But we would like us first to see that our text conveys a timely message to Christian believers. This is a text one wishes could be ever before us. Are we ever desperate in our prayers, crying with Jacob, “I will not let Thee go until Thou bless me?”

**1. SOME OF US DESIRE THE FULNESS OF THE SPIRIT.** You have asked God for His fulness, and you have not received it. Why? Because not half in earnest about it.

**2. SOME OF US LAMENT OVER OUR CORRUPTION,** and long for more holiness. How much time do you spend on your knees asking for heart purity? Is William Law’s statement true in your case? “What made the primitive Christians such eminent instances of piety? If you will here stop, and ask yourselves why you are not as pious as the primitive Christians were, your own heart will tell you, that it is neither through ignorance, nor inability, but purely because you never thoroughly intended it.”

**3. SOME SAY:** “Why, my relatives, my husband, wife, children, scholars are not converted I cannot understand, for I ask God frequently.” Have you ever spent one solid hour with God on this matter?

**4. THESE MERCIES GOD WILL NOT GIVE TO US ON THE GROUNDS ONLY OF OUR EARNESTNESS.** But the earnestness proves that we feel our lack of these coveted mercies, and that we shall value them aright when given.

5. If our text conveys a timely message to the Christian it certainly speaks loudly to the non-Christian.

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**C H Spurgeon - Holy violence** (Full sermon [Holy Violence - audio version](#))

“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of God suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” Matthew 11:12

Frequently complaints are made and surprise expressed by individuals who have never found a blessing rest upon anything they have attempted to do in the service of God. “I have been a Sunday-school teacher for years,” says one, “and I have never seen any of my girls or boys converted.” No, and the reason most likely is, you have never been violent about it; you have never been compelled by the divine Spirit to make up your mind that converted they should be, and no stone shall be left unturned until they

were. You have never been brought by the Spirit to such a passion, that you have said, “I cannot live unless God bless me; I cannot exist unless I see some of these children saved.” Then, falling on your knees in agony of prayer, and putting forth afterwards your trust with the same intensity towards heaven, you would never have been disappointed, “for the violent take it by force.” And you too, my brother in the gospel, you have marvelled and wondered why you have not seen souls regenerated. Did you ever expect it? Why, you preach like one who does not believe what he is saying. Those who believe in Christ, may say of you with kind partiality, “Our minister is a dear good man;” but the careless young men that attend your ministry say, “Does that man expect to make me believe that which he only utters as a dry story, and to convince me when I see him go through the service with all the dullness and monotony of dead routine?” Oh, my brethren, what we want today in the churches is violence; not violence against each other, but violence against death, and hell, against the hardness of other men’s hearts, and against the sleepiness of our own.

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**John MacArthur - JOHN AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN—MATT. 11:12** [Daily Readings From the Life of Christ Volumes 1-3 - Page 9](#)

“The kingdom of heaven” refers to God’s general rule and represents His purpose, message, commands, and activities regarding humanity. This great concept was associated in some fashion with violence since John the Baptist began preaching. Wherever he went, his call for repentance and entrance into the kingdom generated strong and eventually violent opposition.

The verb translated “suffers violence” carries both negative and positive connotations. First is the idea of the kingdom being treated violently by its foes—by those outside it, like the Jewish leaders. They vociferously rejected its spiritual dimension, and so its earthly dimension could not begin for some time.

Second, there is a more proactive and primary meaning to the phrase “suffers violence”—which sees the kingdom as vigorously pressing forward and people forcefully entering it. The angel’s prediction before John’s birth illustrates this positive element (see Luke 1:16–17). Jesus was already teaching about the narrow gate and the narrow way (Matt. 7:13–14), declaring that kingdom citizenship requires self-denial and cross bearing (16:24; cf. 10:38).

To be a Christian today means swimming against the world’s flow, going against its grain, because its satanic system is extremely powerful. Those who truly enter God’s kingdom do so through faith and with great effort—effort that is not their own, but from the sovereign, converting power of the Holy Spirit.

**ASK YOURSELF** You’re certainly familiar with the kingdom of God arousing violent opposition from without. But have you ever thought of it flexing its strength to bring you into its borders? How has the kingdom met you in brute force, causing “violence” to your former manner of living?

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**Matthew 11:13 “For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.**

BGT Matthew 11:13 π ντες γ ρ ο προφ ται κα ν μος ως ω ννου προφ τευσαν·

KJV Matthew 11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

NET Matthew 11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John appeared.

CSB Matthew 11:13 For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John;

ESV Matthew 11:13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John,

NIV Matthew 11:13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

NLT Matthew 11:13 For before John came, all the prophets and the law of Moses looked forward to this present time.

NRS Matthew 11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came;

NJB Matthew 11:13 **Because it was towards John that all the prophecies of the prophets and of the Law were leading;**

NAB Matthew 11:13 All the prophets and the law prophesied up to the time of John.

YLT Matthew 11:13 for all the prophets and the law till John did prophesy,

GWN Matthew 11:13 All the Prophets and Moses' Teachings prophesied up to the time of John.

RSV Matthew 11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John;

NKJ Matthew 11:13 "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

ASV Matthew 11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

MIT Matthew 11:13 All the prophets, as well as the law, prophesied right up to John.

- Mt 5:17-18 Mal 4:6 Lu 24:27,44 Joh 5:46,47 Ac 3:22-24 13:27 Ro 3:21
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 5:17-18+ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Luke 24:27; 44+ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. 44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

Acts 3:22-24+ "Moses said, 'THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED to everything He says to you. 23'And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' 24"And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days.

Luke 16:16+ "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.

## A PIVOTAL TRANSITION IN REDEMPTIVE HISTORY

In the context of In Matthew 11, Jesus is explaining John's identity. The people wondered who John was, and Jesus answers John is more than a prophet (Matthew 11:9), John is the promised forerunner of Malachi 3:1 (Matthew 11:10) and therefore, the long line of prophetic anticipation finds its endpoint with him. Before John, the Scriptures looked ahead to Christ in promise and shadow. With John, the prophesying takes on a new character so that instead of pointing forward distantly, John directly announces the Messiah's arrival.

**For** - Term of explanation. He is explaining Mt 11:12. **Pulpit Commentary** says "It is only right that there should be such a seizing of the kingdom of heaven, for in a certain sense the function of the prophets and the Law ceased with John."

**All the prophets (prophetes) and the Law prophesied (propheteuo) until (heos) John** - The phrase "**the Law and the Prophets**" refers to the entire Old Testament revelation, encompassing both the Mosaic Law and the prophetic writings. Even the Law is said to have "prophesied," because it pointed forward to Christ through its types, shadows, and promises (cf. Luke 24:27+) (See Messianic Prophecies) Thus, both the Law and the Prophets functioned together as a unified witness anticipating the coming Messiah. This includes figures like Malachi, who closed the Old Testament era with the promise:

**"Behold**, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD." (Malachi 4:5-6+)

When Jesus says that "**the Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John**" (Luke 16:16+), the word "**until**" (See "Until") marks a decisive turning point in redemptive history. **Prophesied until John** means that the Old Testament era, which anticipated the coming Messiah in types, shadows, and explicit prophecies, culminates with John the Baptist. It signifies that the Old Testament revelation operated up to a specific moment, namely, the arrival of John the Baptist, and then a new phase began. The Law and the Prophets were not abolished, but their preparatory role reached its climax and fulfillment.

It is important to understand that the true dividing line between the Old and New Covenants is not merely between Malachi and Matthew, but ultimately at the Cross of Jesus Christ (cf. Hebrews 9:15-17+). All believers who lived and died before the Cross belonged to the era of the Old Covenant (but they were saved by belief in what limited understanding they had of Messiah), while those after the Cross live in the full realization of the New Covenant.

John the Baptist stands uniquely at this transition point. He is the final and greatest of the Old Testament prophets (Matthew 11:11), yet also the immediate forerunner of the New Covenant. His ministry signals that the long-awaited fulfillment is no longer distant but

present. In that sense, John's appearance marks the **closing** of the Old Covenant era and the **dawn** of the New, which would be inaugurated through Christ's death and resurrection.

All previous prophets declared, in essence, "the Messiah is coming," but John alone was given the unparalleled privilege of proclaiming:

**"Behold**, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

Thus, John does not merely continue the prophetic tradition, but actually brings it to its climax, standing at the threshold between promise and fulfillment, announcing that the King has arrived.

**TAKEAWAY** - The Law and the Prophets pointed forward to Christ until John, who stands at the turning point of history and announces that what was promised has now arrived. Jesus is the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament (Matthew 5:17). This highlights God's faithfulness that every prophetic promise converges in Christ.

**R T France** - **Until** could include or exclude John, but the following verse will make clear his inclusion among the prophets, just as v. 11 showed his exclusion from the subsequent kingdom of heaven. He belongs to the forward-looking (prophesied) era of the Old Testament. (See [Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary - Page 199](#))

**Craig A Evans** - Jesus is teaching that with the appearance of John, the prophetic history has reached its climax, its fulfillment. No more prophesying is necessary before the kingdom of God (or heaven, as it usually is in Matthew) can come in its fulness. But Jesus is not teaching that the Prophets and the Law are no longer valid or are no longer authoritative. He only means that what they proclaimed has now been realized in the advent of the kingdom. (See [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew-Luke](#))

**Steven Cole** - Jesus represents a new phase in God's program. What the Law and the Prophets proclaimed and promised found fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist was the transitional figure, with a foot in both eras. He was the messenger, prophesied by Malachi, who prepared the way of the Lord. Jesus is that Lord in human flesh, the long-promised Messiah, born of the seed of the woman, who came to crush the serpent's head (Ge 3:15+). But Jesus makes it clear that even though a transition has taken place, it did not nullify or set aside the Law. ([Scoffing or Submitting?](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - John was the last of the OT prophets. Because he only announced the kingdom, he was not as great as the humblest person in the kingdom (v. 11). (Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament)

**William MacDonald** - The entire volume from Genesis to Malachi predicted the coming of the Messiah. When John stepped out on the stage of history, his unique role was not just prophecy; it was announcing the fulfillment of all the prophecies concerning Christ's First Advent. (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**John MacArthur** explains "The Old Testament era, the era of promise, concluded with the ministry of John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets. **In addition to being the final representative of the Old Testament era of promise, John was also the first representative of the New Testament era of fulfillment; his ministry bridged the two eras.** He not only predicted Messiah's appearance, but also witnessed it. Because of his unique position and his privilege to be Messiah's forerunner, Jesus declared John to have been the greatest person who had ever lived up until his day (Mt. 11:11). In his outpouring of praise to God, John's father, Zacharias, had noted the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises in the coming of the Messiah (Lk 1:67-79). John's ministry reached its climax when he baptized Jesus the Messiah. The transition from John to Jesus, from the Old Testament era of promise to the New Testament era of fulfillment was complete. "He must increase," John said of Jesus, "but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Not long afterward, John was imprisoned and executed by being beheaded (Mt 14:3-12). (See [Luke Commentary](#)) (Bolding added)

**Leon Morris** notes that Jesus "does not mean that now that John has come the law and the prophets may be discarded. The whole Christian revelation insists on the continuing significance of both law and prophets. But until the ministry of John the law and the prophets were the sum of the divine revelation; nothing could be set alongside them. Jesus is saying that with his coming a new age has dawned. The law and the prophets are no longer the revelation that is the key to everything else. The revelation made in Christ is the key to the revelation in the law and the prophets. (See [The Gospel According To Matthew](#))

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - God left not himself without witness all along. John ended the chain of foreseers and foretellers, and now the Lord himself appears. Our Lord draws a line at John by saying "until John ": henceforth the kingdom is set up.

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**Until** ([2193](#)) (heos) as an adverb means UNTIL and is used as a preposition meaning unto, as long as, marking the continuance of an action up to the time of another action and followed by the indic., subjunctive, or opt. according to whether the latter action is certain or uncertain. (Excerpt from Zodhiates' Complete Word Study Dictionary- [BORROW](#) - see page 694 for detailed discussion).

See also discussion of the important "time phrase" **Until**

**Gingrich - page 88 (BORROW)** - 1. temporal conjunction till, until Mt 2:9; Mk 6:10; Lk 21:32; Jn 21:22f; Ac 2:35; 1 Cor 4:5; 2 Th 2:7; Heb 10:13. As long as, while Mk 6:45; Lk 17:8; Jn 9:4.—2. functions as prep. w. gen.: of time until, up to Mt 11:13; 27:64; Mk 14:25; Lk 23:44; Ac 1:22; 1 Cor 1:8. e[*wj* ou- until Mt 13:33; Ac 21:26; 25:21. how long Mt 9:19; Jn 10:24; Rev 6:10. Of place as far as, to Lk 2:15; Ac 1:8; 2 Cor 12:2. as many as seven times Mt 18:21f. right into Mk 14:54. there is not even one Ro 3:12.

**Friberg - page 184 (BORROW)** - (1) as a temporal conjunction; (a) to link the event marking the end of a time period to another element in the sentence till, until (Mt 2.9); (b) to link to an event the circumstances on which the beginning of that event depends until (Mt 2.13); (c) to denote the contemporaneous aspect of a time period while, as long as ( Mk 6.45; Jn 9.4); (2) as an improper preposition with the genitive; (a) to denote time until (Mk 15.33); (b) with historical names up to the time of (Acts 13.20); (c) to denote place as far as, to (Mt 24.27); (d) to denote order in a series to (Mt 20.8); (e) to denote the upper limit of degree or measure (up) to (this point), as much as, to the extent of (Mk 6.23)

**Gilbrant** - Heōs serves as a common conjunction and a preposition in classical, Septuagintal, and Biblical Greek. In the New Testament heōs has a variety of functions. Heōs appears much more frequently in the Gospels and Acts than in the rest of the New Testament. The majority of occurrences denote the end of a period of time or the beginning of a period of time. When used in this way heōs means “until” or “unto.” In particular, heōs designates the time at which the kingdom of God will be consummated (Matthew 10:23; 16:28; 26:29; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27). Occasionally heōs means “while” (Matthew 14:22; 26:36; Mark 6:45; 14:32; John 9:4). It sometimes is used to ask “how long” (Matthew 17:17; Mark 9:19; Revelation 6:10), and on at least one occasion (Luke 24:50) heōs is translated “as far as” (cf. Acts 11:19,22). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**HEOS - 108v - down(2), even(5), far(5), how(7), long(1), long\*(7), no more(1), point(2), right(1), until(83), while(5).** Matt. 1:25; Matt. 2:9; Matt. 2:13; Matt. 2:15; Matt. 5:18; Matt. 5:25; Matt. 5:26; Matt. 10:11; Matt. 10:23; Matt. 11:12; Matt. 11:13; Matt. 12:20; Matt. 13:30; Matt. 13:33; Matt. 14:22; Matt. 16:28; Matt. 17:9; Matt. 17:17; Matt. 18:30; Matt. 18:34; Matt. 22:26; Matt. 22:44; Matt. 23:39; Matt. 24:21; Matt. 24:27; Matt. 24:34; Matt. 24:39; Matt. 26:29; Matt. 26:36; Matt. 26:38; Matt. 26:58; Matt. 27:45; Matt. 27:64; Matt. 28:20; Mk. 6:10; Mk. 6:45; Mk. 9:1; Mk. 9:19; Mk. 12:36; Mk. 13:19; Mk. 14:25; Mk. 14:32; Mk. 14:34; Mk. 14:54; Mk. 15:33; Lk. 1:80; Lk. 9:27; Lk. 9:41; Lk. 12:50; Lk. 12:59; Lk. 13:8; Lk. 13:21; Lk. 13:35; Lk. 15:4; Lk. 15:8; Lk. 17:8; Lk. 20:43; Lk. 21:32; Lk. 22:16; Lk. 22:18; Lk. 22:34; Lk. 22:51; Lk. 23:5; Lk. 23:44; Lk. 24:49; Lk. 24:50; Jn. 2:10; Jn. 5:17; Jn. 9:4; Jn. 9:18; Jn. 10:24; Jn. 13:38; Jn. 16:24; Jn. 21:22; Jn. 21:23; Acts 1:8; Acts 1:22; Acts 2:35; Acts 7:45; Acts 8:40; Acts 13:20; Acts 17:14; Acts 17:15; Acts 21:5; Acts 21:26; Acts 23:12; Acts 23:14; Acts 23:21; Acts 25:21; Acts 26:11; Acts 28:23; Rom. 3:12; Rom. 11:8; 1 Co. 4:5; 1 Co. 4:13; 1 Co. 8:7; 1 Co. 15:6; 1 Co. 16:8; 2 Co. 1:13; 2 Thess. 2:7; 1 Tim. 4:13; Heb. 1:13; Heb. 10:13; Jas. 5:7; 2 Pet. 1:19; 1 Jn. 2:9; Rev. 6:10; Rev. 6:11

**HEOS >1000 TIMES IN THE SEPTUAGINT - THIS IS JUST A SAMPLE** - Gen. 3:19; Gen. 6:7; Gen. 7:23; Gen. 8:5; Gen. 8:7; Gen. 8:17; Gen. 10:19; Gen. 10:30; Gen. 11:4; Gen. 11:31; Gen. 12:6; Gen. 13:3; Gen. 13:10; Gen. 13:15; Gen. 14:6; Gen. 14:14; Gen. 14:15; Gen. 14:23; Gen. 15:16; Gen. 15:18; Gen. 18:12; Gen. 19:4; Gen. 19:11; Gen. 19:22; Gen. 19:37; Gen. 19:38; Gen. 22:5; Gen. 24:14; Gen. 24:19; Gen. 24:33; Gen. 25:18; Gen. 26:13; Gen. 26:33; Gen. 27:44; Gen. 28:15; Gen. 29:8; Gen. 32:5; Gen. 32:25; Gen. 32:33; Gen. 33:3; Gen. 33:14; Gen. 34:5; Gen. 35:4; Gen. 35:20; Gen. 38:1; Gen. 38:11; Gen. 38:17; Gen. 39:16; Gen. 41:49; Gen. 42:16; Gen. 43:25; Gen. 44:12; Gen. 46:34; Gen. 47:21; Gen. 47:26; Gen. 48:15; Gen. 49:10; Gen. 49:13; Gen. 50:23;

**Matthew 11:14 “And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.**

BGT Matthew 11:14 κα ε θ λετε δ ξασθαι, α τ ς σιν λ ας μ λλων ρχεσθαι.

KJV Matthew 11:14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

NET Matthew 11:14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, who is to come.

CSB Matthew 11:14 if you're willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who is to come.

ESV Matthew 11:14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

NIV Matthew 11:14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.

NLT Matthew 11:14 And if you are willing to accept what I say, he is Elijah, the one the prophets said would come.

NRS Matthew 11:14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

NJB Matthew 11:14 and he, if you will believe me, is the Elijah who was to return.

NAB Matthew 11:14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, the one who is to come.

YLT Matthew 11:14 and if ye are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who was about to come;

GWN Matthew 11:14 If you are willing to accept their message, John is the Elijah who was to come.

- if - Eze 2:5 3:10,11 Joh 16:12 1Co 3:2
- this - Mt 17:10-13 Mal 4:5 Mk 9:11-13 Lu 1:17 Joh 1:21-23 Rev 20:4
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Malachi 4:5-6 foretold, "Behold, I am going to send you **Elijah the prophet** before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse"

Mark 1:2-4 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER BEFORE YOUR FACE, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; 3 THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.'" 4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

John 1:21 And they asked him, "What then? **Are you Elijah?**" And he \*said, "**I am not.**" "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."

Luke 1:17 "And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him **in the spirit and power of Elijah**, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Luke 7:26-27 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet. 27 "This is the one about whom it is written, 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER BEFORE YOUR FACE, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.'

**And if you are willing (thelo) to accept (dechomai - aorist tense) it, John himself is Elijah who was to come-** IF is first class condition signifying what follows is true. The final words of Malachi 4:5-6 predicted the coming of Elijah before the [Day of the Lord](#). Although John did not see himself as fulfilling Elijah's role (John 1:21), Jesus did making the equation (of John to Elijah) explicit for his disciples declaring "**Elijah** is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you, that **Elijah already came**, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." (Mt 17:11-12).

So how could John (who himself denied being Elijah) be as Jesus declared "Elijah who was to come"? One way would be that John "was a forerunner before Him (MESSIAH) **in the spirit and power of Elijah**." (Lk 1:17+) Elijah took a bold, uncompromising stand for the Word of God in the face of strong opposition from King Ahab (Read 1Ki 18:17-24+). John would also take a bold stand for the Word of God but unlike Elijah would not perform miracles. John's ministry was a purely spiritual ministry (John 10:41+). There were similarities between John and Elijah, including their strange physical appearance (cf 2Ki 1:8 with Mk 1:6+) and their powerful, uncompromising preaching. John the Baptist was not Elijah returned to earth, but his message to Israel to repent and be reconciled to God was proclaimed in the same **spirit and power** shown in Elijah's ministry and John's life in the wilderness was similar to Elijah's life. (See also the comments on Luke 1:17)

**John MacArthur** says "And so the angel says there's coming one in the spirit and power of Elijah, he's the Elijah that Malachi promised. He's coming to announce the arrival of the Messiah. And Jesus says, "If you believe the message, if you believe the gospel, if you believe Me, he will fulfill that Elijah prophecy. He will be that Elijah-like prophet." Now that leaves room for another thought, what if they don't believe because they didn't. Well they didn't and therefore even though John came in the spirit and power of Elijah, there still yet must be a future fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy before the great and terrible [Day of the Lord](#). Before Jesus comes to destroy the ungodly, to set up His earthly Kingdom, there will be in that day before He arrives another Elijah-like prophet who will announce His arrival. Perhaps this could be one of the two prophets described in

Revelation 11+. ([The Greatness of John the Baptist](#))

**William Hendriksen** has a good explanation on the meaning of **in the spirit (pneuma) and power (dunamis) of Elijah** asking "Does this mean that John was Elijah? The answer is both **No** and **Yes**. Not literally, as is clear from the fact that when John was asked, **Are you Elijah?** he truthfully answered, "I am not" (John 1:21<sup>±</sup>). But figuratively, so that Jesus even calls him Elijah (Mt. 11:13, 14<sup>±</sup>; cf. Mt 17:12; Mark 9:12, 13<sup>±</sup>). The solution is given here in Luke 1:17 - The **spirit and power of Elijah** was going to be clearly displayed in [John the Baptist](#). Compare Elijah's boldness, "I have not troubled Israel but you [Ahab] have" (1Ki 18:18), with the Baptist's (Mt 14:4<sup>±</sup>), "It isn't right for you [Herod Antipas] to have her [your brother Philip's wife Herodias]." And see also Mt. 3:7<sup>±</sup>; Lk 3:7<sup>±</sup>, Lk 3:19<sup>±</sup>. (Borrow [New Testament commentary: Exposition of the Gospel page 72](#))

**Louis Barbieri** - Those leaders wanted a kingdom, but not the kind Jesus was offering. So they were resisting the message and attempting to establish their own rule. But John's message was true, and if the nation would accept it, and consequently accept Jesus, **John** would fulfill the prophecies of **Elijah**. Only if they accepted the message would John the Baptist be the Elijah who was to come (cf. [Mal. 4:5](#)). Because the nation rejected the Messiah, Elijah's coming is still future (cf. Mal 4:6 with Acts 3:21). (See context [Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Michael Andrus** explains "You may recall that the prophet Elijah never died physically; he was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire. Therefore, he could conceivably return in his physical body and serve once more as a prophet in the last days. Jesus seems to say here in Matthew 11 that John the Baptizer could have served as the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy had the Jewish people accepted Jesus as their Messiah. But since they did not, the fulfillment of that prophecy must wait. In fact, I believe Elijah may be one of the Two Witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11, who will preach and do amazing miracles during the Great Tribulation, who will be martyred by the Anti-Christ, and then will be raised from the dead by God's power." ([When God Sits on His Hands](#))

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - John was the Elijah for whom they looked. Would people believe it? Would they obey his command to repent? Then he would be to them a true Elijah, and make straight for them the way of the Lord. Even a man sent of God is to his hearer very much what that hearer chooses to make of him. No doubt, many a great boon has been missed by men failing to accept it. "If ye will receive it," a minister, may be the channel of salvation, or the means of spiritual edification, or of surpassing joy; but if not received it may become a weariness, or as meaningless as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

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**Accept** (1209) **dechomai** = [middle voice](#) of a primary verb) means to to receive something offered or transmitted by another (Luke 2:28). To take something into one's hand and so to grasp (Luke 2:28, 22:17). To be receptive to someone (Mt 10:14, 40). To take a favorable attitude toward something (Mt 11:14).

**Dechomai** means to accept with a deliberate and ready reception of what is offered, to receive kindly and so to take to oneself what is presented or brought by another. It means to welcome as a teacher, a friend, or a guest into one's house. The word describes accepting persons with open arms, minds, and hearts, even going beyond normally expected gracious hospitality. The term was often used of welcoming honored guests and meeting their needs with special attention and kindness.

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#### **QUESTION - Why must Elijah return before the end times (Malachi 4:5-6)?**

**ANSWER** - Malachi 4:5-6 offers an intriguing prophecy: "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse." To this day, Jewish [Seders](#) include an empty chair at the table in anticipation that Elijah will return to herald the Messiah in fulfillment of Malachi's word.

According to Malachi 4:6, the reason for Elijah's return will be to "turn the hearts" of fathers and their children to each other. In other words, the goal would be reconciliation. In the New Testament, Jesus reveals that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy:

"All the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:13-14).

This fulfillment is also mentioned in Mark 1:2-4 and Luke 1:17; 7:27.

Specifically related to Malachi 4:5-6 is Matthew 17:10-13: "His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. . . .' Then the disciples understood that He

spoke to them of John the Baptist.”

The scribes were the Jewish religious teachers, mostly Pharisees and Sadducees, who provided commentary on the Jewish Scriptures. Peter, James, and John were familiar with their teachings and asked Jesus about Elijah after seeing Jesus with Moses and Elijah at the [transfiguration](#) (Matthew 17:1-8). Jesus clearly stated that Elijah had already come, but, tragically, he was not recognized and had been killed. Jesus then predicted He would likewise die at the hands of His enemies (Mt 17:13).

A brief look at the ministry of John the Baptist reveals many notable ways that he was “Elijah.” First, God predicted John’s work as being like that of Elijah (Luke 1:17). Second, he dressed like Elijah (2 Kings 1:8 and Matthew 3:4). Third, like Elijah, John the Baptist preached in the wilderness (Matthew 3:1). Fourth, both men preached a message of repentance. Fifth, both men withstood kings and had high-profile enemies (1 Kings 18:17 and Matthew 14:3).

Some argue that John the Baptist was not the Elijah to come because John himself said that he was not Elijah. “And they asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not’” (John 1:21). There are two explanations for this apparent contradiction. First, because Elijah had never died (2 Kings 2:11), many first-century rabbis taught that Elijah was still alive and would reappear before the Messiah’s arrival. When John denied being Elijah, he could have been countering the idea that he was the *actual* Elijah who had been taken to heaven.

Second, John’s words could indicate a difference between John’s view of himself and Jesus’ view of him. John may not have seen himself as the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6. However, Jesus did. There is no contradiction, then, simply a humble prophet giving an honest opinion of himself. John rejected the honor (cf. John 3:30), yet Jesus credited John as the fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy regarding the return of Elijah.

As the metaphorical Elijah, John called people to repentance and a life of obedience, preparing the people of his generation for the coming of Jesus Christ, the One who had come “to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10) and to establish the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18).

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### Norman Geisler - [When Critics Ask](#)

MATTHEW 11:14—Didn’t Jesus say John the Baptist was Elijah reincarnated?

**PROBLEM:** Jesus refers here to John the Baptist as “Elijah who is to come” (cf. Matt. 17:12; Mark 9:11–13). But, since Elijah had died many centuries before, John must have been a reincarnation of Elijah.

**SOLUTION:** There are many reasons why this verse does not teach reincarnation.

First, John and Elijah did not have the same being—they had the same function. Jesus was not teaching that John the Baptist was literally Elijah, but simply that he came “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17), namely, to continue his prophetic ministry.

Second, Jesus’ disciples understood that He was speaking about John the Baptist, since Elijah appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:10–13). Since John had already lived and died by then, and since Elijah still had the same name and self-consciousness, Elijah had obviously not been reincarnated as John the Baptist.

Third, Elijah does not fit the reincarnation model for another reason—he did not die. He was taken to heaven like Enoch, who did not “see death” (2 Kings 2:11; cf. Heb. 11:5). According to traditional reincarnation, one must first die before he can be reincarnated into another body.

Fourth, if there is any doubt about this passage, it should be understood in the light of the clear teaching of Scripture opposing reincarnation. Hebrews, for example declares, “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27; cf. John 9:2).

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### John MacArthur - JOHN LIKENED TO ELIJAH—MATT. 11:13–14 [Daily Readings From the Life of Christ Volumes 1-3 - Page 10](#)

All of God’s Old Testament revelation climaxed in John the Baptist. And the apostle John picked up the theme (which at times had been only implicit) that said, “The Messiah is coming!”

The Lord Jesus suggests a close likeness between John and the prophet Elijah, based on Malachi’s prophecy, which are the final words of the Old Testament: “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse” (Mal. 4:5–6).

That Malachi referred to the future John the Baptist and not a literally reincarnated Elijah is clear when we look at Luke 1:17—“It is

he [John] who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah." John himself clearly denied that he was actually Elijah come back (John 1:21). Rather he was like Elijah—inwardly in "spirit and power" and outwardly in independence and nonconformity.

John was uniquely great, in the mold of Elijah and more so than any man but Jesus; but God's highest bestowing of greatness is not John's. His greatness, Jesus declared, pales beside those like us who enter God's spiritual kingdom by trusting in the Son as Lord and Savior. Thus true greatness is to be like Jesus Christ, not like Elijah or John the Baptist.

ASK YOURSELF "Spirit and power." How could these words more readily describe you and your ministry in the kingdom? Are these characteristics the sole possession of the overly demonstrably inclined? Or does "spirit and power" even have a gentle side in the cause of Christ?

**Matthew 11:15 "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."**

BGT Matthew 11:15 χων τα κου τω.

KJV Matthew 11:15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

NET Matthew 11:15 The one who has ears had better listen!

CSB Matthew 11:15 Anyone who has ears should listen!

ESV Matthew 11:15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

NIV Matthew 11:15 He who has ears, let him hear.

NLT Matthew 11:15 Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!

NRS Matthew 11:15 Let anyone with ears listen!

NJB Matthew 11:15 Anyone who has ears should listen!

NAB Matthew 11:15 Whoever has ears ought to hear.

YLT Matthew 11:15 he who is having ears to hear -- let him hear.

GWN Matthew 11:15 Let the person who has ears listen!

- Mt 13:9,43 Mk 4:9,23 Mk 7:16 Lu 8:8 Rev 2:7,11,17,29 3:6,13,22
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 13:9 "**He who has ears, let him hear.**"

Matthew 13:43 "Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. **He who has ears, let him hear.**"

Mark 4:9 And He was saying, "**He who has ears to hear, let him hear.**"

Mark 4:23 "**If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**"

### LISTEN NOT JUST PHYSICALLY BUT SPIRITUALLY

**He who has** (present tense) **ears to hear** ([akouo](#) present tense), **let him hear** ([akouo](#)) - Only Jesus issues this command. While this phrase is sometimes at the conclusion (Mt 13:43), here it is at the inception of His discourse. This call goes out to everyone, for everyone has **ears to hear** (deaf cannot hear but they do have ears and would be included in this charge). **Let him hear** is [present imperative](#) calling for continual attention to spiritual truth. However Eph 2:1 says we are all "dead in our trespasses and sins" and so we are unable to hear and understand spiritual truth without God's intervention. In short, spiritually dead men can physically hear, but need a moving of the [Holy Spirit to obey](#) Jesus' command and of course they need to act on it.

I agree with [Bob Utley's](#) comment that "This referred to the fact that unless the Holy Spirit aids believers' insight they cannot understand spiritual truth (cf. Mt 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; Luke 8:8; 14:35; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9). However, it also implies that the willingness of the individual to hear and respond is also necessary."

**F F Bruce on He who has ears to hear let him hear** - "A proverbial form of speech often used by Jesus after important utterances, here for the first time in Matthew." (E.g., see Lk 8:8+) Note that this same command (except now from the risen Jesus) is repeated after each of declaration in the letters to the seven churches in the Revelation (Rev 2:7,11,17,29 Rev 3:6,13,22)

**R C H Lenski** points out that "The thing that is to be heard properly so as to affect the hearer's heart is this fulfilled prophecy, the fact that John is Elijah as Jesus presents this in his discourse on John." (Borrow [Interpretation of St Matthew's Gospel page 438](#))

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - This matter is worthy of earnest heed. If you can hear anything, hear this truth. This call to attention needs to be oft repeated. Through the hearing ear, the divine blessing comes to the soul; therefore hear, and your soul shall live. Our Lord and King, who made the ear, has a right to demand its attention to his voice. Some men have no ears to hear truth, but quick ears for falsehood. We should be grateful if the Lord has given us spiritual perception; for "the hearing ear and the seeing eye" are from the Lord. 16-19. But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

Our Lord condemns the folly of the age in which he lived. The people would not listen to the messenger of God whoever he might be, but raised childish objections. Therefore the Lord likens them to "children sitting in the markets", who were asked to play by their fellows, but they could never agree upon the game. If certain of the children would imitate a wedding, and began to pipe, the others would not dance; and when they proposed a funeral, and began to mourn, the others would not lament.

They were disagreeable, sullen, and captiously resolved to reject every offer.

Such was the foolish manner of men in our Lord's time. John was an ascetic: he must be out of his mind and under the influence of a demon.

Jesus is a man among men, and goes to their feasts: he is accused of eating and drinking to excess, and associating with the sordid and wicked. There was no pleasing them. Thus is it at this hour: one preacher, who speaks with elegant diction, is too flowery; and another, who uses plain speech, is vulgar: the instructive preacher is dull, and the earnest preacher is far too excitable. There is no suiting some people. Even the great Lord of all finds his wise arrangements met with discontent.

Yet wisdom, after all, gave forth her teachings by rightly chosen ambassadors. She is justified of her children. Her children recognized the fitness of her messengers; and her messengers, who were also her children, were a credit to her choice, and justified her selection and preparation of them. The All-wise God is a better judge of what a minister should be than any of us are. Well did George Herbert write — "Judge not the preacher, he is thy judge." The varied orders of preachers are all needful, and, if we would but know it, they are all ours; whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas; and it is ours not to cavil at them, but to give earnest heed to their proposals.

Lord, deliver us from a captious, fault-finding spirit; for if we begin objecting, we are apt to keep on at it. If we will not hear one preacher, we may soon find ourselves quite weary of a second and a third, and before long it may come to pass that we cannot hear any minister to profit.

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**Hearing From God - Bob Gass - [A Fresh Word for Today: 365 Insights for Daily Living - Page 25](#)**

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Matthew 11:15)

It's not only possible to hear from God, it's absolutely necessary! Mary took the time to sit and listen to Jesus. (See Luke 10:39.) Later, while Peter attempted to persuade Him not to go to the cross, she anointed Him with oil in preparation for it. Mary heard Him; Peter didn't! Have you learned yet how to hear God?

Fifteen times in the New Testament our Lord says, "He that hath an ear let Him hear." That tells you three important things. First, you were born into God's family with spiritual ears; second, you have to learn how to use them; third, hearing from God must become the highest priority in your life. A baby is born with the ability to hear, but he doesn't know what he's hearing. Understanding takes time; it takes intimacy with his parents. Listen: "Then he opened their minds so they could understand" (Luke 24:45, NIV). He'll teach you!

Why is it that we can hear from God in times of crisis, yet not at other times? Because we have to! Until that changes, we'll keep living from crisis to crisis, so we'll never learn to hear from Him, either quickly or correctly. Jesus said, "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge" (John 5:30). Jesus did only the things placed in His mind by the Father.

HE WANTS YOU TO LEARN TO LIVE THAT WAY, TOO. JUST TRY IT FOR ONE DAY; YOU'LL NEVER WANT TO LIVE ANY OTHER WAY!

**Matthew 11:16 “But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children,**

BGT Matthew 11:16 Τ ν ι δ μοι σω τ ν γενε ν τα την; μο α σ τ ν παιδ ο ις καθημ νοις ν τα ς γορα ς προσφω νο ντα το ς τ ροις

KJV Matthew 11:16 But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

NET Matthew 11:16 "To what should I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces who call out to one another,

CSB Matthew 11:16 "To what should I compare this generation? It's like children sitting in the marketplaces who call out to each other:

ESV Matthew 11:16 "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates,

NIV Matthew 11:16 "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

NLT Matthew 11:16 "To what can I compare this generation? It is like children playing a game in the public square. They complain to their friends,

NRS Matthew 11:16 "But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

NJB Matthew 11:16 'What comparison can I find for this generation? It is like children shouting to each other as they sit in the market place:

NAB Matthew 11:16 "To what shall I compare this generation? It is like children who sit in marketplaces and call to one another,

YLT Matthew 11:16 'And to what shall I liken this generation? it is like little children in market-places, sitting and calling to their comrades,

GWN Matthew 11:16 "How can I describe the people who are living now? They are like children who sit in the marketplaces and shout to other children,

- whereunto - La 2:13 Mk 4:30 Lu 13:18
- this - Mt 12:34 Mt 23:36 Mt 24:34
- It is - Lu 7:31-35
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 12:39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous **generation** craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;

Matthew 16:4 "An evil and adulterous **generation** seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And He left them, and went away.

Matthew 23:36 "Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this **generation**.

Luke 7:31-35+ "To what then shall I compare the men of this **generation**, and what are they like? 32 "They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another; and they say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.' 33 "For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, 'He has a demon!' 34 "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking; and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man, and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners!' 35 "Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

## JESUS PARABLE OF THE BRATS

**David Turner** says that "Jesus then turned from explaining John's significance to confronting the unbelief of "this generation" (See [The Gospel of Matthew - The Gospel of Mark - Page 162](#))

**Leon Morris** says that "Jesus turns to the people of His day and uses the contrasting emphases in the ministries of John and Himself to show the unreasonableness of their refusal to take either preacher seriously. (See [The Gospel According To Matthew](#))

**But to what shall I compare (homoioo) this generation (genea)? It is like (homoios - term of comparison/simile) children (paidion) sitting in the market places (agora), who call out to the other children,** - This has been called the "Parable of the brats" as Jesus turns His comments to the "deplorable conduct of His hearers" (Lenski). Jesus begins with a question and then immediately answers His own question. Keep in mind that there is a big crowd surrounding Him and so these words are for their ears (cf ears in Mt 11:15). The word of **children (paidion)** stresses the need for moral training and guidance. Jesus is telling us what **this generation** (cf Lk 7:31) is like. **This generation** refers primarily the Jews of His time but is applicable to any **generation** that acts "childish" like they acted. The **market place (agora)** was where children in ancient times played their little games.

**John MacArthur** points out that "**I compare this generation** reflects a common oriental expression used to introduce a parable or other illustration. The Midrash, an ancient compilation of Jewish traditional teaching, contains many expressions (such as "To what is the matter like?" or "How can I illustrate this point?") used by rabbis to introduce illustrative metaphors, analogies, and stories. In this tradition Jesus was saying, "How can I illustrate the responses of **this generation** of God's people to His truth and work? To what do they **compare**?" ([Matthew Commentary - Page 260](#))

**R C H Lenski** points out that "The thing that is to be heard properly so as to affect the hearer's heart is this fulfilled prophecy, the fact that John is Elijah as Jesus presents this in his discourse on John." The large, open market places were convenient playgrounds for the children of the neighborhood when the market was not in progress. Jesus has in mind a group of such children, such as he had occasionally watched. This group tried to direct the play first to one game, then to another, as their mood and fancy dictated. They expected all the other children to accept their suggestion; and when these did not comply, they pettishly cried out and blamed the others. (Borrow [Interpretation of St Matthew's Gospel page 438](#))

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**Generation (1074) genea** gives us our English genealogy) literally refers to those descended from a common ancestor and in this sense refers to a race, a clan or descendants.

The contemporaries of John and Jesus are described uniformly as people who reject the emissaries of God (Mt 11:20-24; cf. Mt 10:14-15). Negative adjectives are applied to them: evil and adulterous (Mt 12:39; Mt 16:4); evil (Mt 12:45); unbelieving and perverted (Mt 17:17). The description evokes comparison to the wilderness generation (Dt. 1:35; 32:5, 20). Finally "this generation" is compared to those swept away in judgment in the days of Noah (Mt 24:34-44).

**Like** (same)(3664) **homoios** from **homos** = one and the same) means *like* when referring to objects and *of the same status* when referring to individuals. This adjective is also used of possessions shared in common. The prominent use of **homoios** in the New Testament is to introduce parables and to explain imagery in prophetic passages. In biblical Greek homoios means of the same kind.

**Children (3813) paidion** diminutive of pais = child) is a little child of either sex, ranging from an infant (Mt 19:13, 14; Mk 10:13-15; Lk 18:16, 17, etc) to children who are older (Mt 11:16; Mt 14:21; 15:38; 18:2-5, etc) Paidion is used repeatedly of the infant Jesus in Matthew (Mt 2:8-9, 11, 13-14, 20-21) Paidion is used as a term of comparison, Jesus making the point that we are to become like a little child (Mk 10:15 Lk 18:17), the implication of course being that this is not an infant but a child old enough to express saving faith in the Messiah!

**Uses of paidion in Luke** - Lk. 1:59; Lk. 1:66; Lk. 1:76; Lk. 1:80; Lk. 2:17; Lk. 2:27; Lk. 2:40; Lk. 7:32; Lk. 9:47; Lk. 9:48; Lk. 11:7; Lk. 18:16; Lk. 18:17

**Market place (58) (agora)** is the town-square where the people assembled in public. It can also refer to a market or thoroughfare or a broad street. Here it refers to a forum or a market place where things were exposed for sale and where assemblies and public trials were held (See similar use in Mk 7:4; Acts 16:19; 17:17) (see [use](#) in Acts 16:19)

**Vincent on market place - Agora** From  $\alpha\gamma\omicron\rho\alpha$ , to assemble. Wyc., renders cheepyng; compare cheapside, the place for buying and selling; for the word cheap had originally no reference to small price, but meant simply barter or price. The primary conception in the Greek word has nothing to do with buying and selling.

γοπᾶ is an assembly; then the place of assembly. The idea of a place of trade comes in afterward, and naturally, since trade plants itself where people habitually gather. Hence the Roman Forum was devoted, not only to popular and judicial assemblies, but to commercial purposes, especially of bankers. The idea of trade gradually becomes the dominant one in the word. In Eastern cities the markets are held in bazaars and streets, rather than in squares. In these public places the children would be found playing. Compare Zech. 8:5.

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**John MacArthur - CRITICISM OF JOHN AND JESUS**—Mt. 11:16–19 [Daily Readings From the Life of Christ Volumes 1-3 - Page 11](#)

Contemporary people love to criticize whatever the church does, which is really just a convenient excuse to reject the gospel. Such was also true in Jesus' day, and here He uses two illustrations of criticism to make that point.

First, He applies the children's game "Funeral" to the criticism of John the Baptist. John lived in the funeral mode, and people became so resentful of his constant stress on repentance and judgment that they claimed he had a demon. He would not let his audience be neutral—he called for commitment to truth and righteousness. But instead of accepting that call, they generally rebuked John's righteousness.

Second, Jesus applies the game of "Wedding" to Himself. In contrast to John's austere living, Jesus participated in society's usual activities. His ministry brought Him into contact with hundreds of ordinary people. This difference from John had not escaped his disciples (Matt. 9:14–15), but the critics exaggerated Jesus' activities and said His appetites were out of control. It was true that Jesus befriended tax collectors and sinners, but only to offer deliverance from their sins, not to be involved with them in sin (cf. 9:12–13).

Their opponents criticized John and Jesus differently, but the lesson is the same. Like today, the enemies of truth found it easy to criticize but difficult to explain how so many lives were transformed from despair to hope, from anger to love, from enmity to Christ to fellowship with Him.

**ASK YOURSELF** What are some of the most common criticisms against Christianity? Which ones hold water, and which are just rebellious bluster?

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**Matthew 11:17 and say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'**

BGT Matthew 11:17 λ γουσιβ· η λ σαμεν μ ν κα ο κ ρχ σασθε, θρην σαμεν κα ο κ κ ψασθε.

KJV Matthew 11:17 And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

NET Matthew 11:17 'We played the flute for you, yet you did not dance; we wailed in mourning, yet you did not weep.'

CSB Matthew 11:17 We played the flute for you, but you didn't dance; we sang a lament, but you didn't mourn!

ESV Matthew 11:17 "'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'

NIV Matthew 11:17 " 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'

NLT Matthew 11:17 'We played wedding songs, and you didn't dance, so we played funeral songs, and you didn't mourn.'

NRS Matthew 11:17 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

NJB Matthew 11:17 We played the pipes for you, and you wouldn't dance; we sang dirges, and you wouldn't be mourners.

NAB Matthew 11:17 'We played the flute for you, but you did not dance, we sang a dirge but you did not mourn.'

YLT Matthew 11:17 and saying, We piped unto you, and ye did not dance, we lamented to you, and ye did not smite the breast.

GWN Matthew 11:17 'We played music for you, but you didn't dance. We sang a funeral song, but you didn't show any sadness.'

- We - Isa 28:9-13 1Co 9:19-23
- piped - Mt 9:15,23 1Ki 1:40 Isa 30:29 Jer 9:17-20 31:4 Lu 15:25
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## LIKE CHILDREN WHO COULD NOT AGREE

**and say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn-** They were like children who were not pleased by anything, could not come to agreement and rejected both the joyful things (**flute**) as well as the mournful (**dirge**). As **Morris** says "Glad or sad, their fellows declined to join in with them." This is the point of the parable, that there is no pleasing some folks (in this case "this generation") And so as seen in the following context (see explanation in Mt 11:18) **this generation** largely (of course with exceptions) rejected (like the immature children rejected both games) both John the Baptist and Jesus their Messiah.

**R T France** says it this way - They (THE JEWS) refused to hear God's voice in either form, the somber or the joyful, in judgment or in mercy, if it did not accord with their conventions. There was no pleasing them." (See [The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

**D A Carson** says that "There are either two kinds of games (Mt 11:17), a wedding game and a funeral game, or, less likely, two cries within one game; but the children cannot be satisfied with either." (See [Matthew](#))

**Wycliffe Bible Commentary** on v16-17 - **Like unto children.** This homely parable portrays a scene in the public concourse, where a group of peevish children cannot decide what game to play (cf. Lk 7:31-35). Suggestions that they play wedding (**pipied, danced**) and funeral (**mourned, lamented**) prove unappealing; so they play nothing.

*there are multitudes of men who always quarrel with any kind of ministry that God may send to them.*

**Spurgeon** - They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, at play; the playing of children is often according to the manners and customs of grown up people...."You would not play a merry game when we asked you to do so."...."You would not play either at funerals or weddings."...These children could not agree as to what game they would play. "Come," they said, "let us imitate a wedding, we will pipe, and you can dance." But the others would not dance. "Well," they said, "let us play at something. Let us imitate a funeral; we will be the mourners." Then the others would not weep. They would agree to nothing that was proposed, and that is the point of the Saviour's analogy, that there are multitudes of men who always quarrel with any kind of ministry that God may send to them. This man's style is much too florid; he has a superabundance of the flowers of oratory. That other man is much too dull; there is nothing interesting about his discourses. This man is too coarse; he is so rough as even to be vulgar. That other man is too refined, and uses language which shoots over people's heads. It is easy to find fault when you want to do so. Any stick will do to beat a dog, and any kind of excuse will do to allow your conscience to escape from the message of an earnest ministry. Our Lord told the people that this was the way they had acted towards Himself and John the Baptist.

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### J J Knapp - Mourning and Singing    Matthew 11:17

The inflexible heart of Messiah's contemporaries was pictured effectively in the parable of the wilful children who played in the market place. In easterly vividness and with the childlike urge to imitate the impressive events of adult life, at times a song of mourning was started, as could be heard with each procession of mourning from the hired mourners, and then again the flute was taken up, as this was wont to take place in the procession of the bridegroom. However, children did not always want to play along, and so we understand the complaint, that their companions directed to them: "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented."

Equally stubborn was the generation amongst which Jesus with His herald, John the Baptist, had appeared. John was a preacher of penitence, dressed in a garment of camel's hair, with a leather girdle about his loins, living in the wilderness, feeding himself with grasshoppers and wild honey, and threatening the unrepentant with the axe that was already laid at the root of the tree; yes, pressing upon them that, if they would not repent, they would face an inescapable doom,—he sang them a song of mourning, but they had not come to the brokenness of heart, they had not mourned. Jesus Himself, in contrast, had appeared in the midst of the people, eating and drinking, sharing in their well and woe, doing good and blessing, with promises of grace and peace, forgiveness of guilt and righteousness,—He played upon the flute, but they had also rejected Him in unbelief and had even called Him a glutton

and a winebibber, they had also refused Him the agreement of their heart and had not danced upon His playing of the flute.

Let this unbelief not be found with any one of us. Both the song of mourning of John and the playing on the flute of Jesus we need, it is only a characterization of the message of repentance and the message of grace. Whosoever has ears to hear, let him hear, listening to the moving song of repentance, that speaks of sin and guilt, of righteousness and of judgement, of the demand of inner sorrow and of an upright repentance, and that makes us to ask in tears: "LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" However, also let him listen to the playing of the flute of grace: peace by the blood of the cross for the deepest fallen one and for the remotest wandering one in the way of faith; salvation for the present, glory of the coming life. The song of mourning makes us weep because of our self, the playing of the flute makes us rejoice in the redemption in Christ, till in eternity the song of mourning shall cease, and within and without of us it shall become one great Song of Praise.

### Matthew 11:18 "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!'"

BGT Matthew 11:18 λθεν γ ρ ω ννης μ τε σθ ων μ τε π νων, κα λ γουσιν· δαιμ νιον χει.

KJV Matthew 11:18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

NET Matthew 11:18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!'

CSB Matthew 11:18 For John did not come eating or drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!'

ESV Matthew 11:18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.'

NIV Matthew 11:18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.'

NLT Matthew 11:18 For John didn't spend his time eating and drinking, and you say, 'He's possessed by a demon.'

NRS Matthew 11:18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon';

NJB Matthew 11:18 'For John came, neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He is possessed."

NAB Matthew 11:18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they said, 'He is possessed by a demon.'

YLT Matthew 11:18 'For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a demon;

GWN Matthew 11:18 "John came neither eating nor drinking, and people say, 'There's a demon in him!'"

- **John** - Mt 3:4 Jer 15:17 16:8,9 Lu 1:15 1Co 9:27
- **He** - Mt 10:25 2Ki 9:11 Jer 29:26 Ho 9:7 Joh 7:20 8:48 10:20 Ac 26:24
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JESUS EXPLAINS THE PARABLE OF THE BRATS

**For** ([gar](#)) is a term of explanation introducing why Jesus had just told the "parable of the brats." He will explain why He used that parable and in the following [pericope](#) (Mt 11:20-24) He will describe the judgment for their failure to believe either John B or Himself. In the last [pericope](#) of this chapter (Mt 11:25-30) Jesus offers the way of escape from the judgment He had just described.

**John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.'** ([daimonion](#)) - True, John did not come eating and drinking, but they totally misunderstood the motives for his ascetic wilderness lifestyle and thus accused him of being demon possessed. In effect, most of the Jews rejected John and his message calling for repentance (Mt 3:2).

**NET Note** - John the Baptist was too separatist and ascetic for some, and so he was accused of not being directed by God, but by a demon. (ED: But the truth is the people rejected him not because of his asceticism but because of his call to repent and believe).

**John MacArthur** comments that "John's message and way of life were in the funeral mode, so to speak. Some people became so resentful of his continual emphasis on repentance and judgment that they charged him with having **a demon**. He grated against their immoral and unspiritual nerves, and they railed out against him. They tolerated him for a short while, enjoying the novelty and excitement of his preaching. But he would not let them be neutral bystanders, uncommitted onlookers who heard and observed without decision or commitment. When they saw they had to choose, they chose not to believe or follow him. Instead of accepting John's rebuke of their wickedness, they rebuked his righteousness. They charged the prophet who had no equal, who was greater than any other person "born of woman" (11:11), with being demon possessed. (See [Matthew Commentary - Page 261](#))

**Matthew 11:19 “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners! Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”**

BGT Matthew 11:19 λθεν υς το νθρ που σθων κα πνων, κα λγουσιν· δο νθρωπος φγος κα ο νοπτης, τελων ν φλος κα μαρτωλ ν. κα δικαιοθη σοφα π τ ν ργων α τ ς.

KJV Matthew 11:19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

NET Matthew 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him, a glutton and a drunk, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

CSB Matthew 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners! ' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

ESV Matthew 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."

NIV Matthew 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." ' But wisdom is proved right by her actions."

NLT Matthew 11:19 The Son of Man, on the other hand, feasts and drinks, and you say, 'He's a glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and other sinners!' But wisdom is shown to be right by its results."

NRS Matthew 11:19 the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

NJB Matthew 11:19 The Son of man came, eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.'

NAB Matthew 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they said, 'Look, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is vindicated by her works."

YLT Matthew 11:19 the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Lo, a man, a glutton, and a wine-drinker, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners, and wisdom was justified of her children.'

GWN Matthew 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and people say, 'Look at him! He's a glutton and a drunk, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' "Yet, wisdom is proved right by its actions."

- **came** - Lu 5:29,30 7:34,36 14:1 Joh 2:2 12:2-8 Ro 15:2
- **a friend** - Mt 9:10,11 Lu 15:1,2 19:7
- **yet** - Ps 92:5,6 Pr 17:24 Lu 7:29,35 1Co 1:24-29 Eph 3:8-10 Rev 5:11-14 7:12
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **JESUS FALSELY ACCUSED**

The **Son of Man** came eating ([esthio](#) - present tense) and drinking (present tense), and they say, “Behold ([idou](#)) a gluttonous ([phagos](#)) man and a drunkard ([oinopotes](#)), a friend ([philos](#)) of tax collectors ([telones](#)) and sinners ([hamartolos](#))!” - Jesus' adversaries hurl at Him these false, libelous charges of excess eating and drinking (which He never did), because they simply could not understand His love for lost sinners, whom they despised (even though they too were lost sinners!) And they did not want to believe His message to sinners! The Holy One was considered falsely to be unholy and as one who compromised by fellowshiping with notorious sinners. Their accusation was accurate in part, that Jesus did continually eat and drink with sinners, but the Jews missed (and/or rejected) His motive which was to save their souls. Paradoxically, the hated tax collectors and despised sinners were society's "outsiders" who ended up being "insiders" with Jesus because they welcomed him (cf. Mt 9:9-13). Sadly, most of the Jews rejected Jesus' and His message calling them to repentance (Mt 4:17, Mk 1:15 = "repent and believe") and they would be the "outsiders" throughout eternity (Rev 22:15+)!

*John's ascetic lifestyle was branded as fanatical,  
and Jesus' convivial approach was thought scandalous.*

--New Bible Commentary

**THOUGHT** - We praise God for the truth of the last part of their accusations for we were all greedy like tax collectors and we were all **sinners**. And the truth is we are still sinners, but now we are saved **sinners**. Before Christ we chased after sin, but now sin chases after us! We now have the Spirit given power to say "No" to sin (Ro 8:13).

*The outward form of ministry is never the issue,  
but rather the truth of the message.*

-- John MacArthur

**John MacArthur** explains it this way - John was sober, severe, stark, a preacher of judgment, calling for repentance, weeping in light of God's wrath, and keeping himself separate from sinners. Jesus, in contrast, was tender, merciful, gracious, compassionate, a preacher of blessing who mingled with sinners, whom He came to seek and save. In the end, it is not the **style** of ministry that matters but its **substance**. **The people ultimately rejected the ministries of both John and Jesus**. Though their emphases may have differed, both John and Jesus called for repentance, promised forgiveness, warned of judgment, and proclaimed the coming of the kingdom. The outward form of ministry is never the issue, but rather the truth of the message. In every generation there will be spiritual brats who reject the truth, like those who refused to mourn with John or laugh with Jesus. (See [Luke Commentary](#))

*There was no pleasing them either way; whichever form of preacher  
the Lord sent, whether an ascetic or one like themselves, they found fault..*

**Spurgeon** - That is the Lord Jesus himself. He comes as a man among men, and sits with you at your feasts, and does not lead the life of an ascetic. "He does not pretend to be an ascetic, he comes, on the contrary, to show that neither meat nor drink can save a man. What do you say, then, of this **Son of man**?" There was no pleasing them either way; whichever form of preacher the Lord sent, whether an ascetic or one like themselves, they found fault...."He is out of his mind altogether, possessed by the devil."

**NET NOTE** - Neither were they happy with Jesus (the Son of Man), even though he was the opposite of John and associated freely with people like tax collectors and sinners. Either way, God's messengers were subject to complaint.

**William Barclay** - The plain fact is that when people do not want to listen to the truth, they will easily enough find an excuse for not listening. They do not even try to be consistent in their criticism. They will criticize the same person and the same institution from quite opposite grounds and reasons. If people are determined to make no response, they will remain stubbornly and sullenly unresponsive no matter what invitation is made to them.

**Yet wisdom (sophia) is vindicated (dikaioo - justified, proved right) by her deeds (ergon) - Wisdom** refers to God's **wisdom** which would be proven by the fruit of John and Jesus' ministries.

**Charles Swindoll** on "**Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds**" "indicates that, while John and Jesus would be rejected by many, their actions would ultimately be justified. These two wise messengers of God didn't have to answer to the worldly critics and cynics; their mission had been directed by God. Similarly, the wisdom of accepting the message of John the Baptizer and Jesus will ultimately be vindicated. When the dust settles from the conflict of worldviews and religions ancient and modern, time will reveal who has believed and lived correctly. (See [Insights on Matthew 1-15 - Page 217](#))

**Phil Newton** - The communist leaders of the 20th century in the USSR and her vassal countries mocked Christ, the Christian gospel, gospel preaching, and holy living. They agreed with Mao's remark, "Religion is the opiate of the people." But where is the USSR? Where are Lenin, Stalin, and Mao? Where is Ceausescu? "**Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds**" But one day, all will be brought to the grand crescendo of the ages. Christ the reigning King will be revealed in all of His glory, and then who will be championing the feminist movement, the gay/lesbian movement, the abortion industry, the anti-Christian movement in the media, and the immoral practices of the nations? "**Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds**." And as for you - where will you stand on that grand day? Have you sought to diffuse the power of the gospel, and its call to repentance? Have you made your excuses, and downplayed the gospel message so that you might continue on your own path? ([The Face of the Non-repentant](#))

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**Gluttonous (5314)**(phagos) is one given habitually to greedy and voracious eating. Excessive, intemperate eating. Gluttony is the act of eating or drinking to excess, or overindulging in anything to the point of waste. It can also refer to a lack of control over one's relationship with food, or harming the body through excessive desire for food. Only twice in the Bible - Matt. 11:19; Lk. 7:34 (not in Lxx).

**Drunkard (3630)** oinopotes (oinos - wine + potes - drinker) one who habitually drinks too much wine or alcoholic beverage. A winebibber, given to wine. Only twice in the Bible - Matt. 11:19; Lk. 7:34 (not in Lxx).

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**QUESTION - [What does it mean that wisdom is justified by her children \(Matthew 11:19\)?](#)**

**ANSWER** - Matthew 11 records a remarkable portrait of [John the Baptist](#) and provides an important reminder of God's grace and understanding even when we are suffering from doubt. The section concludes with the curious statement that wisdom is justified by her children (Matthew 11:19, NKJV).

John had served faithfully as the forerunner to the Messiah, announcing the coming kingdom of Jesus, yet, instead of enjoying the fruits of his labor and the glories that one might expect in a newly installed kingdom, John was in prison soon to be executed—no kingdom had actually yet arrived. It seems that because of his circumstances he [suffered some doubts](#) and sent messengers to ask Jesus whether He was the expected One or whether John should look for someone else (Matthew 11:3).

Jesus responded to John's query with patience and grace, reminding John of the miracles prophesied of the Messiah that Jesus was accomplishing (Matthew 11:5–6). After that powerful yet gracious affirmation, Jesus continued, reminding listeners of the importance of John and his ministry. John was a mighty prophet, but he was more than just a prophet (Matthew 11:7–9)—he fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi 3:1 and faithfully served as the forerunner to the Messiah, announcing the coming kingdom. John would be an important piece in that kingdom even if it wouldn't come right away.

The response to the message of Jesus and John had been overwhelming: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12, NKJV). That is, there had been an extraordinary rush of people thronging to hear the gospel, and their eagerness to learn of the kingdom was so overwhelming it was as if they were attacking a city and beating down the doors to enter. Jesus pointed to John as the fulfillment of Malachi 4:6—John was the "Elijah" to precede the great and awesome day of the Lord (Matthew 11:14). Jesus then chastises that generation for their inconsistent treatment of John and Himself, and He observes that "wisdom is justified by her children" (Matthew 11:19, NKJV) or "wisdom is proved right by her deeds" (NIV).

That generation was inconsistent in their judgments. They behaved like children who wanted to but couldn't control other children (Matthew 11:16–17). They critiqued John for not eating and drinking with other people (Matthew 11:18), but when Jesus came eating and drinking with people, they criticized Him for doing it (Matthew 11:19). That generation was prideful, thinking they had the wisdom to judge rightly, but they illustrated the injustice of their judgments. In so doing they failed to recognize the forerunner to the Messiah and thus failed to receive the Messiah and His kingdom.

When Jesus challenged His listeners that wisdom is justified by her children, He was saying that the soundness of wisdom can be judged by the fruit of that wisdom. The people of that generation thought they had sound wisdom and were prideful in their own ability to discern and judge. But Jesus challenged their wisdom by looking at the "children" of their wisdom—what did their "wisdom" produce? Their deeds were woeful, in that they failed to recognize both the forerunner of the Messiah and the Messiah Himself.

It is remarkable that those who had [spiritual pride](#) and confidence in themselves Jesus rebuked soundly, while the one who was struggling with doubt Jesus affirmed and encouraged. Jesus had reminded John that Jesus was the King and that John was the forerunner, but it was important not to stumble over the King and His methods (Matthew 11:6). On the other hand, Jesus chastised those who had made arrogant and wrongful judgments against John and Jesus. This is an important reminder that God is patient with His children even when they are doubting, but God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). We should never be arrogant in our judgments but should develop our conclusions humbly and by seeking God's wisdom revealed in His Word, just as Jesus was encouraging John to do.

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**Craig Blomberg** in [Contagious Holiness](#) - A glutton and a drunkard: Matthew 11:19 and parallel

Both Matthew 11:19 and its Lukan counterpart (Luke 7:34) belong to Jesus' conclusion to the little parable of the children in the marketplace. The two versions (Matt. 11:16–19; Luke 7:31–35) are extremely similar throughout the entire account, especially after the introductory questions. Both Gospels also place this parable in the context of Jesus' witness concerning John (Matt. 11:7–15; Luke 7:24–30), which in turn follows immediately after Jesus has replied to messengers coming from the imprisoned Baptist (Matt. 11:2–6; Luke 7:18–23). The most notable differences in these larger contexts are that only Matthew contains verses 12–15, with their treatments of the time from John the Baptist 'until now', the kingdom suffering violence, the prophets and the Law prophesying until John, and John representing an Elijah figure. Luke, on the other hand, in place of these sayings uniquely includes the parenthetical verses 29–30, which refer to all the people (laos), and tax collectors in particular, justifying God, in contrast with the rejection of Jesus by Pharisees and scribes.<sup>18</sup> While the parenthetical comments obviously reflect Luke's clarifications as narrator, the fact that he refers back to contrasting responses to the ministries of John and Jesus suggests these are observations firmly rooted in the tradition. No later Christian is likely to have created such portraits that highlight the centrality of response to John, almost at the expense of Jesus. Verses 29–30 likewise create a tight link between the material on the Baptist and the parable, just as Matthew does with his different insertions.

I have elsewhere encapsulated the three main points of the parable proper: on the nature of the rejection of John, the nature of the

rejection of Jesus, and the vindication of God's wisdom represented by both of his spokesmen (Blomberg 1990: 210). Robert Stein (1992: 232–233) unpacks the first two of these points as follows:

The rejection of the gospel message is not due to the form of its presentation. John preached the gospel while living an ascetic lifestyle (Luke 5:33a). Jesus preached the gospel in the joy of the kingdom's arrival, but both were rejected (5:33b–35). Neither satisfied the wishes of this generation because their message was the same. Both preached a message of repentance (cf. 3:3, 8 and 5:32; 13:3, 5) and both offered salvation to the outcasts (cf. 3:12–14 with 4:18; 5:27–32; 7:22). (See [Luke - Page 232](#))

At the same time,

The difference between the form of Jesus' message and of John's message was striking. John understood the coming of God's kingdom as requiring repentance and portrayed this via his fasting; Jesus saw the coming of God's kingdom as a time of great celebration and portrayed this by the analogy of a wedding feast (5:33–34). Both are valid expressions of different aspects of God's kingdom, and if either is totally ignored, an unbalanced portrayal will result. (R. Stein 1992: 233 - [Luke - Page 232](#))

Jesus is no doubt creating caricatures of reactions to John and himself, but each takes its point of departure from genuine tendencies in the behaviour of each man—John's self-denial and Jesus' 'partying'. The language about John 'not eating or drinking' versus Jesus 'eating and drinking' obviously cannot be taken too literally (Matt. 11:18–19). John did not deny himself all foodstuffs, and the 'problem' with Jesus was the manner and settings in which he ate and drank. Perhaps Luke is trying to clarify precisely this when he adds that John came eating 'no bread' and drinking 'no wine' (Luke 7:33), though bread and wine can be stock terms for food in general (Fitzmyer 1981: 680–681). It is possible that the Baptist literally drank no wine (Luke 1:14) but unlikely that he ate no bread (Davies and Allison 1991: 253). On the other hand, Marshall (1978: 301) thinks that Jesus means John did abstain from normal forms of food (cf. Mark 1:6 pars.), while Bovon (2002: 287) remarks, 'If *artos* does not simply mean food (thus indicating sparing intake), as often in the Hebrew Bible, then it means that John, as Mark 1 intimates, eats only raw foods unprepared by human hands. His dietary intake was in any case more ascetic than the Law of Moses commanded, so that his lifestyle attracted criticism.'

On the other hand, if the longer Lukan form is more original, later abbreviated by Matthew, then perhaps the implication of Luke 7:34 is that the Son of Man came eating bread and drinking wine. At least those who accused him of being a drunkard (Luke 7:34; Matt. 11:19) obviously believed he drank a fermented beverage and drank too much! Freyne (2000: 271–286) thinks Jesus is being associated with Dionysiac cultists, who were known in Galilee, as tiled portraits in the ruins of Sepphoris have demonstrated, while the vilification of Jesus depended on a caricature and thus is not to be taken literally. It is to be taken seriously, however, as others' perceptions of him (contra Morris 1992: 285, who thinks he is merely being accused of not adopting an ascetic lifestyle). Both *phagos* and *oinopotēs* appear in the New Testament only in this parable. The same combination is found in Deuteronomy 21:20 and Proverbs 23:20–21. The former context proves intriguing, since there 'a glutton and a drunkard' alludes to the rebellious son whose misbehaviour created a capital offence (Keener 1999: 342). The caricature of Jesus 'was perhaps caused by [his] frequent attendance at banquets' (Hagner 1993: 310). The reference in the parable to piping (or playing the flute) (Matt. 11:17; Luke 7:32) suggests that one of the children's proposals was to 'play wedding'. This immediately makes one think both of Jesus' parables involving wedding banquets (esp. Matt. 22:1–14; 25:1–13) and of his actual attendance at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1–11).

If 'a glutton and a drunkard' is something of a caricature, what do we say about the parallel charge of being 'a friend of tax collectors and sinners'? Here it would seem the language is more straightforward, because such friendship has been securely established in other passages already, apart from any parabolic or metaphorical context.<sup>20</sup> The two charges in Matthew 11:19b/Luke 7:34b are simply juxtaposed without a connective conjunction. The grammar alone, therefore, does not prove that Jesus' scandalous friendship is directly tied to his customs at table, but with the numerous examples in parabolic and non-parabolic narratives throughout the Gospels of Jesus' table fellowship with sinners, the link is almost certainly implied here too. We do not have to choose between D. Smith (2003), Corley (1993b), and others who see merely an unjustified slander, and the majority who assert that Jesus did indeed fraternize with the outcasts and despised of his world. A genuine pattern of behaviour can be unfairly exaggerated. As Rudolf Schnackenburg (2002: 107) explains, 'Underlying the reproach are Jesus' meals with "tax collectors and sinners" (see 9:10). The crass expressions used reflect denunciations in leading Jewish circles and are actually traceable to Jesus' days on earth.'

Despite the variation between 'deeds' and 'children', the closing lines in both versions of the parable agree that God's wisdom is justified. Thus both John's and Jesus' messages, once allowance is made for the caricatures, reflect God's true plans for his people. The use of this kind of more generalizable proverb ('wisdom is justified by her deeds/children') serves rhetorically to deflect tension away from the immediate controversy by appealing to a shared history and cultural values. Thus Jesus employs a 'soft word that turns away wrath' (Shantz 2001: 259). Placed in the larger context of Jesus' justification of John, the parable makes at best an implicit Christological claim but points at least as much to the Baptist as to Jesus himself. These features can only enhance the case

for authenticity (on which see further Blomberg 1990: 208–210).

The referents of our text once again include the coming Messianic banquet. ‘The uncomprehending generation could not understand that Jesus was signaling the in-breaking of the eschatological time of salvation: that his meals with sinners presaged the eschatological banquet ... of those who have received God’s grace and forgiveness at the time of his eschatological visitation. The harsh judgment upon Jesus here expressed is not likely to have been formulated in the later church’ (Nolland 1989: 346). Or, with Green (1997: 303–304):

The existence of two such widely divergent appraisals of the ministries of John and Jesus points to the inherent ambiguity of their ministry practices. By those who are aligned with the world system that supports and is supported by ‘this generation,’ they will be interpreted one way. Within that system Jesus has no claim to holiness, but as a companion of sinners and toll collectors he has distinguished himself as one of their company, and John is relegated to the status of a demoniac. But for those who visualize the world through the lens of allegiance to God and God’s purpose, the characteristic practices of John and Jesus are understood along vastly different lines. Now they are regarded as manifestations of the divine purpose at work in the world.<sup>21</sup> (Source: [Contagious Holiness: Jesus' Meals with Sinners - Page 117](#))

**Matthew 11:20 Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent.**

BGT Matthew 11:20 Τ τε ρξατο νειδ ζειν τ ς π λεις ν α ς γ νοντο α πλε σται δυν μεις α το , τι ο μετεν ησαν·

KJV Matthew 11:20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

NET Matthew 11:20 Then Jesus began to criticize openly the cities in which he had done many of his miracles, because they did not repent.

CSB Matthew 11:20 Then He proceeded to denounce the towns where most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent:

ESV Matthew 11:20 Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent.

NIV Matthew 11:20 Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.

NLT Matthew 11:20 Then Jesus began to denounce the towns where he had done so many of his miracles, because they hadn't repented of their sins and turned to God.

NRS Matthew 11:20 Then he began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done, because they did not repent.

NJB Matthew 11:20 Then he began to reproach the towns in which most of his miracles had been worked, because they refused to repent.

NAB Matthew 11:20 Then he began to reproach the towns where most of his mighty deeds had been done, since they had not repented.

YLT Matthew 11:20 Then began he to reproach the cities in which were done most of his mighty works, because they did not reform.

GWN Matthew 11:20 Then Jesus denounced the cities where he had worked most of his miracles because they had not changed the way they thought and acted.

- began - Lu 10:13-15
- upbraid - Ps 81:11-13 Isa 1:2-5 Mic 6:1-5 Mk 9:19 16:14 Jas 1:5
- because - Mt 12:41 21:28-32 Jer 8:6 Ac 17:20 2Ti 2:25,26 Rev 2:21 9:20,21 Rev 16:9,11
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Luke 10:13-15+ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14

"But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment, than for you. 15 "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to [Hades!](#)

## JUDGMENT ANNOUNCED WHERE LIGHT REJECTED

**Then** (see note on [then](#) marking progression in text) - Jesus has just described this childlike generation as one that for the most part have rejected the messages of John and of Jesus. Now Jesus gives the solemn warning of the judgment of cities for rejecting the clear presentation of truth.

*Great privilege  
brings great responsibility!*

**He began** ([archo](#)) to denounce ([oneidizo](#)) the cities in which most of His miracles ([dunamis](#)) were done, because ([hoti](#)) they did ( [ou](#) - absolutely did) **not repent** ([metaneo](#)) - While we do not know how many cities existed in Israel in Jesus' day, it is clear from this verse that three cities received considerably more "spiritual light" than others in the form of Jesus' supernatural miraculous deeds.

*The more men hear and see of the Lord's work, the greater is their obligation to repent. Where most is given most is required.*

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - Some cities were more favored with the Lord's presence than others, and therefore he looked for more from them. These cities ought to have repented, or Christ would not have upbraided them: repentance is a duty. The more men hear and see of the Lord's work, the greater is their obligation to repent. Where most is given most is required. Men are responsible for the way in which they treat the Lord Jesus and "his mighty works." There is a time for upbraiding: "Then began he." The most loving preacher will see cause for complaining of his impenitent hearers: HE upbraids, even he who also wept. Repentance is what we who are preachers drive at; and where we do not see it, we are sore troubled. Our trouble is not that our hearers did not applaud our ability, but because they repented not. They have enough to repent of, and without repentance woe is upon them, and therefore we mourn that they do not repent.

**David Guzik** makes a sobering point - This principle – greater light means greater responsibility – means that the western world has a tremendous accountability before God. The west has had an access to the gospel that no other society has, yet remains in desperate need of repentance.

**Myron Augsburger** on Matthew 11:20–24 - The passage is a sharp warning over the unbelief of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. The comparative symbols suggest that God's judgments are conditioned by the amount of opportunity to understand the will of God which a given people may have experienced. The warning is with three perceptions: (1) responsibility, v. 20, as seen in the call for their repentance; (2) accountability, vv. 21–22, as they had been given more in the understanding of God than the rich merchant cities who had been so profligate and were chastised by Nebuchadnezzar and again by Alexander. And (3) opportunity, vv. 23–24, especially since it was in Jesus' hometown; the people were proud of Him but refused to live by His teachings. Capernaum was exalted, like Babylon, in pride comparative to Lucifer (Is. 14:13–15). (See [The Preacher's Commentary - Vol. 24: Matthew](#))

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**Repent** ([3340](#)) [metaneo](#) from **meta** = with, among + **noeo** = to think, exercise the mind <> from **nous** = mind; cf [metanoia](#)) means to have another mind. **Friberg** says it literally means to "perceive afterward, with the implication of being too late to avoid consequences." (Analytical Lexicon). **Metaneo** means to change one's mind (one's heart) in respect to sin, God, and self. To turn to God and from sin ([Luke 15:7,10+](#) = "one sinner who **repents**", cf illustration of repentance = [1 Th 1:9+](#)). While **repentance** involves an intellectual decision, it is more than that because the intellectual decision must produce a change in one's behavior. On the subject of seeking the lost, John Wesley (1703-91) issued a stern warning: "The church has nothing to do but to save souls; therefore spend and be spent in this work. It is not your business to speak so many times, but to save souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to **repentance**."

"Repentance is a change of the mind,  
and regeneration is a change of the man."  
-- Puritan Thomas Adams

**God uses at least four factors to prompt repentance** = (1) The knowledge of God's Truth should prompt repentance (Mt 11:21-24 - where Chorazin, et al refused to repent at the Truth; cp Lk 16:30-31 which also illustrates the sufficiency of the Truth to prompt repentance.) Note the deadly deception - one can have Truth

(as well as #2 sorrow) without true repentance! Beware! (2) Sorrow for sin can lead to repentance (2Cor 7:9-10), but the sorrow per se should NOT be confused with true repentance. E.g., Judas felt sorrow for betraying Jesus but did not repent. (3) God's kindness prompts (leads to) repentance (Ro 2:4). (4) Fear of final judgment (as discussed here in Acts 17:30-31) can motivate one to true repentance. Indeed, realization that there is no other way of escape but through Jesus, should cause any "rational" person to repent.

**Bob Utley** - Repentance is a turning from sin and self, the negative aspect of salvation, while faith is a turning to God in Christ, the positive aspect of salvation (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16, 19; 20:21). By combining the meanings of the Greek and Hebrew words, the meaning of repentance is a change of mind followed by a change of action. Repentance is more than feelings (cf. 2 Cor. 7:8-11). It must result in a lifestyle change. See complete note at 4:17.

**Repentance** is aptly depicted by the military command "**About, face!**" The repentant person in effect turns around 180 degrees and goes the other direction. And keep in mind that the spiritual dynamics of true repentance are enabled by the Holy Spirit (cf Acts 5:31+, Acts 11:18+, 2 Ti 2:25+). In other words repentance is a work of grace and not merely a human effort, although it does require the repentant individual to make a **volitional** choice. Repentance then involves the mysterious interaction of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Further, this change of mind may, especially in the case of Christians who have fallen into sin, be preceded by sorrow (2 Cor 7:8, 9, 10, 11); but sorrow for sin, though it may cause repentance, is not repentance. Darrell Bock writes "the point is that repentance involves a reorientation of perspective, a fresh point of view. When dealing with God's plan, it means to see that plan in a new way and to orient oneself to it. Luke demonstrates the fruit of repentance expresses itself concretely (Lk 3:10-14+). Repentance expresses itself in life, especially in how one treats others." (**Gulp!**) There can be no genuine conversion without genuine repentance.

**Wayne Detzler** - [Borrow NT Words in Today's Language page 382](#) - The three words "turn," "repentance," and "conversion" all share a basic meaning in Greek. They all speak of a complete change in life or thought. Several Greek words relate to these concepts, and we shall consider two of them. The first word is epistrepho, which means to turn oneself around. This may be a turning of the body, or it may refer to changing one's thoughts or attitudes. Very early in the history of Greek literature, this word came to mean turning one's thoughts to God or to piety. It is found 1,050 times in the Septuagint Greek Old Testament, and many times it spoke of Israel returning to Jehovah. The second word is metanoia, which literally means "a change in mind." This term is almost absent from ancient classical Greek. It really gained its content from the New Testament. Contained in this concept are the ideas of remorse and regret for wrongdoing. When the Septuagint Greek Old Testament was translated, this word was used to depict the prophets' preaching about repentance.

In illustrating this concept, we shall first look at the meaning of repentance. Samuel Davies said: "The question is not, 'Shall I repent?' for that is beyond doubt. But the question is, 'Shall I repent now, when it may save me? Or shall I put it off to the eternal world, when my repentance will be my punishment?'"

A ministerial colleague in Britain is Leith Samuel. He commented on repentance: "Our Lord has laid down emphatically that a man must repent of his sins, and particularly of his critical and independent attitude toward God, or he cannot begin to live the Christian life."

Neorthodox theologian Emil Brunner (1889-1966) described repentance: "Repentance is despair of self, despairing of self-help in removing the guilt that we have brought upon us. Repentance means a radical turning away from self-reliance to trust in God alone. To repent means to recognize self-trust to be the heart of sin."

George Whitefield (1714-70) was famous for revival preaching on both sides of the Atlantic. On the subject of repentance he said: "Let a man go to the grammar school of faith and repentance before he goes to the university of election and predestination."

Arising clearly out of repentance is conversion, about which Ralph Turnbull said: "Since the will to war is latent in human nature, only a conversion based on spiritual renewal can lead men to a new concept of living."

An anonymous writer put the essence of conversion in this sentence: "When I recognized the Master as my Guide, He steered me across a threshold into unventured expanses, all charted, as I discovered, in His Word."

One of the lesser lights in Puritanism was William Secker, but his statement on conversion is excellent: "When the wheels of a clock move within, the hands on the dial will move without. When the heart of a man is sound in conversion, then the life will be fair in profession."

Another Puritan, George Swinnock, warned against delay in being converted: “All the while thou delayest, God is more provoked, the wicked one more encouraged, thy heart more hardened, thy debts more increased, thy soul more endangered, and all the difficulties of conversion daily more and more multiplied upon thee, having a day more to repent of, and a day less to repent in.”

Yet another injunction to conversion was issued by the Puritan William Guthrie, who said: “The Bible, which ranges over a period of 4,000 years, records but one instance of a deathbed conversion—one that none may despair, and but one that none may presume.... There be few at all saved.... and fewest saved this way.”

**Miracles** (1411) **dunamis** from **dunamai** = to be able, to have power) power especially achieving power. It refers to intrinsic power or inherent ability, the power or ability to carry out some function, the potential for functioning in some way (power, might, strength, ability, capability), the power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature. **Dunamis** is the implied ability or capacity to perform. It conveys the idea of effective, productive energy, rather than that which is raw and unbridled. **Dunamis** ([Click here](#) for all the NT verses that use dunamis) is a key word in the NT being found in 115 verses in the NAS most often in the **Gospels** and especially by Dr. Luke and in the **Revelation** translated variously as: **ability**, 4; meaning, 1; mightily, 1; mighty, 1; miracle, 2; **miracles**, 17; miraculous powers, 3; **power**, 83; powers, 6; strength, 2; wealth, 1.

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## A U-Turn

Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. MATTHEW 11:20

The forecast in the newspaper said the high for the day was supposed to be fifty-three degrees. I left for the two-mile walk to work at 10 a.m. About a block from home, I realized it was colder than I thought it would be, and I probably needed a hat to compliment my jacket and gloves. But I was moving at a fast pace, headed toward a goal, and I didn't want to stop and turn around.

As I walked further, covering my cold ears with my gloved hands, I thought about how often I get the idea that something needs to be done a certain way. I will feel the Spirit nudge me to let it go, look at it from a different perspective and lighten up, but I am at a fast-moving pace toward my goal. Therefore, I often end up plowing into the situation like a bull into a china closet. By the time I am finished apologizing and cleaning up the mess, I realize that it would have been better to turn around and go back to a different way of thinking or acting.

To say “I'm sorry; I was wrong” is hard. It is also freeing because if I can admit to choosing wrongly, then I can choose to do it right the next time. In today's verse, the Greek word for repent means “to change one's mind.” Some people feel it is a sign of weakness to say they were wrong. In reality, the ability to stop, admit a mistake and go a different direction is a sign of strength.

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## QUESTION - [What is the definition of a miracle? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**ANSWER** - The biblical definition of a miracle would be something like this: “an event that involves the direct and powerful action of God, transcending the ordinary laws of nature and defying common expectations of behavior.” Miracles are extraordinary occurrences that can only be attributed to the supernatural work of God and demonstrate His involvement in human history. God employs miracles in the Bible to reveal Himself, His character, and His purposes to humans through phenomena that are not otherwise explainable (Exodus 3:1–6).

Miracles provide evidence of God's presence and power in the world and demonstrate His authority on behalf of His servants. A miracle may be performed directly by God or through a human agent. Other words used to describe miracles in the Bible are *signs and wonders* (typically used together), *powers*, and *mighty works*.

One of the greatest miracles is God's creation of the world and everything in it (Genesis 1:1–3:24). Equally astounding is the miracle of the [Incarnation](#)—that the eternal Son of God took on human flesh (John 1:14; Philippians 2:7) and then, through the stunning miracle of the resurrection, overcame death and the powers of hell so that believers in Him might gain eternal life (Romans 4:24–25; 10:9; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 1:18).

The Bible reveals several different forms of miracles. The Old Testament records unusual celestial events, as in the time the Lord caused the sun and moon to stand still to aid Joshua's army at Gibeon in their victory over the Amorite kings (Joshua 10:9–15). Several instances of God's divine control over nature—as in the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21–22) and the crossing of the Jordan River (Joshua 3:14–17)—are displayed in the Old Testament. God can miraculously cause animals and inanimate objects to act in astonishing ways (Numbers 22:22–35; 2 Kings 6:5–7). Miracles of instantaneous healing, such as when Naaman is cured of leprosy (2 Kings 5:14) or when Jesus heals two blind men (Matthew 9:27–31), appear in both the Old and New Testament.

Miracles in the New Testament are performed through human intermediaries such as the apostles, but most significantly through

Jesus Christ. In all four Gospels, miracles play a critical role in Jesus' ministry (Mark 1:32–34; 3:7–10). Jesus performs miracles of healing (John 4:46–53), provision of food (Mark 6:30–44), and control over nature (Matthew 14:32–33). New Testament miracles consistently display God's power and either confirm or demonstrate the message of salvation in Jesus Christ (John 11:38–46). The Gospels record about 37 miracles of Jesus, although the apostle John stresses that these only scratch the surface of all that our Savior did (John 21:25).

The miracles recorded in the Bible served several functions. Some miracles validated God's superiority over false gods (1 Kings 18:20–40), while others validated God's message (Isaiah 38:7–8); others brought punishment, in addition to fulfilling some of the other functions, as in the wonders performed before Pharaoh (Exodus 7:1–11:10). God's miracles of provision met human needs, supplying manna to eat in the wilderness (Exodus 16:11–21) and feeding the hungry crowds (Matthew 15:32–39). Miracles of communication conveyed important messages from God (Daniel 5:1–12). Miracles of judgment brought punishment and correction (Exodus 32:35; 1 Samuel 5:6–12). Miracles of exorcism set people free from demonic control and spread the good news of Jesus (Luke 4:31–37). Miracles of resurrection demonstrated God's sovereignty and almighty power (1 Kings 17:17–24; Luke 7:11–17).

In summary, a miracle is a divine work of God that transcends human understanding and inspires wonder, displays the greatness of God, and causes people to recognize that God is active in the world.

#### **Related Resources:**

- [What were the miracles of Jesus?](#)

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#### **J R Miller - Warning and Invitation Matthew 11:20-30**

"Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent." Matthew 11:20

It seems strange to hear Jesus upbraiding. His words usually were most gracious and loving. Here, however, we hear Him speaking in tones of sharpness and severity. Yet the phase of His character which is now revealed is not inconsistent with other representations of Him in the Gospels. We must not think of Jesus as having no capacity for anger. He was all love—but love can be severe, even dreadful. While He was a friend of sinners and went to His cross to redeem the ungodly—yet He hated sin. He was just and holy.

We should notice carefully, however, the reason for this upbraiding. It fell upon the cities in which Jesus had done most of His mighty works. These were not His first words to the people of these cities. There had been long months of loving ministry, with miracles of mercy, with words of grace, revealings of the Father-heart of God, and offers of eternal life—before He spoke the words of chiding we now hear Him speak. But the people of these favored cities had been unaffected by all this love. They had gone on in their sins, unrepentant. They had accepted Christ's gifts of love—but had not accepted Him as their Lord. They had taken His help, His kindness, the things He had done for them so lavishly—but they had rejected Him.

The upbraiding of these cities was because after all that he had done for them, after all their spiritual opportunities and privileges, they had rejected Jesus. It was not impatience on His part that made Him severe. He had not grown weary loving, even without return. But the fact that the cities had received so much Divine favor, made their sin in rejecting Christ far greater.

Tyre and Sidon, great commercial cities which had been denounced by the prophets for their sins, would have repented, Jesus said—if such Divine blessings as had been shown to Chorazin and Bethsaida had been given to them. Sodom was the great historical example of wickedness in the history of the world, and its destruction was a notable instance of judgment. But even Sodom would have repented, if it had received such calls and had enjoyed such privileges as had Capernaum. And Sodom's judgment would be more tolerable than that of Capernaum.

There is something startling in what Jesus says here about the doom of these Galilean cities, and the reason for it. They had had high privileges, and had disregarded them. What then about the places in our own day which have had exceptional privileges and have not improved them? What about those who have been brought up in Christian homes, amid the most gracious influences, who have seen Christ continually and have known the beautiful things of His love from infancy—and after all have kept their hearts closed upon Him, refusing His love! The question with which we are really personally concerned is not with Chorazin or Capernaum, but ourselves, our privileges and what we are doing with them.

"More tolerable." So we would better have been born and brought up in some heathen land, never hearing of Christ—than to have had the highest Christian privileges, and then to have turned our back on the Savior of men. We may perish with Christ at our door. Christian privileges will not save us. The question after all is, "What are you doing with Christ?"

The other part of our passage is in a different tone. Here we find mercy again in its most gracious mood. The invitation in the closing

verses is better understood when we have studied the great words that precede it. "All things have been committed to me by my Father," said Jesus. All things had been put into His hands, all power, all mercy, all gifts, all life. This ought to be a great comfort to us, amid this world's mysteries and perplexities, when there are things which threaten to destroy us. It is Jesus Christ, the Christ of the gospel, in whose nail-marked hands are all our affairs.

There can be no revealing of the Father, except as Jesus Christ wills to reveal Him. It is very important then to learn how He dispenses the revelation which is in His hand exclusively. Will He impart it only to a few great saints, to a little company of wise men, to certain rare spirits? The answer is in the gracious invitation which follows, "Come unto Me, all who that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Yet there is a distinct class of people to whom the gracious invitation is especially given, "all who that labor and are heavy laden." This does not mean the rich, the noble of birth, the high of rank, the wise the great among men. It includes the lowly, the oppressed, the overburdened, the weary, those who are in distress. Need is the only condition. There is no one anywhere who desires the blessings of love, of mercy, of grace, to whom this wonderful invitation is not given and who may not claim it and accept it with all confidence.

Perhaps no other of Christ's words has given comfort to more people, than this promise of rest. It meets every heart's deepest longing. What is this rest? It is not cessation from work. Work is part of the constitution of human life. It is necessary to health, to happiness, even to existence. God works. "My Father works," said Jesus, "and I work" (see John 5:17). There is a curse on idleness.

It is rest of soul that Jesus promises. The life is at unrest. It is all jangled and can have no rest until it is brought into harmony. Sin is the cause of this universal human unrest, and rest can come only when forgiveness has come. And this is the first rest that is promised. Everyone who comes to Christ is forgiven.

There are two rests promised. "I will give you rest." This rest comes at once. Every weary one who comes to Christ in penitence and with repentance—is forgiven, reconciled and restored to Divine favor.

Then there is a rest which comes later and only through self-discipline and patient learning. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me... and you shall find rest." To take Christ's yoke on us is to take Him as our Master, to let Him rule our life. The thought of a yoke is suggestive of bondage and humiliation. But the yoke of Christ is nothing galling or dishonoring in it. "My yoke is easy," He says. He is a gentle taskmaster. He requires entire submission to His will. He will not share our subjection with any other master. We must take His yoke upon us willingly, cheerfully, without reserve. But His commandments are not grievous, His burden is light. Then we will find honor and blessing in it.

A yoke implies two united, serving together, walking side by side under the same load. It is Christ's yoke we are to bear, which means that He shares it with us. His shoulder is under every load of ours. If we have a sorrow—it is His, too. In all our afflictions—He is afflicted. Thus it becomes a joy to take Christ's yoke. When He is our Master, we are free from all other masters. In bearing His yoke, we will find rest unto our souls. Our lives under His sway will be at peace.

Another step in finding rest is to enter Christ's school. "Learn of Me," said the Master. We are only beginners when we first become Christians. A good man said, "It takes a long time to learn to be kind—it takes a whole lifetime." He was right—it does take as many years as one lives, to learn the one little lesson of kindness. Paul said, and said it when he was well on in life, "I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). We would suppose that such a wonderful man as Paul was, did not have to learn the lesson of contentment. We can scarcely think of him as ever fretting about his condition and circumstances. But evidently he did, and it was a long, difficult lesson for him to learn to be content anywhere, in any and every experience. Even Jesus Himself had to learn life's lessons. In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is said that He learned obedience by the things that He suffered (see Hebrews 5:7, 8).

All of Christian life is a school. We enter it when we first come to Christ. We begin at the lowest grade. We do not have to wait until we know a great deal before we begin to attend school. School is not for finished scholars—but for the most ignorant. We may come to Christ when we know almost nothing. He is a teacher and He wants us to become learners. Gentleness is a lesson which we are to learn. One young girl said, "I never can get over being jealous. I cannot bear to have my friends love anybody else. I want them to love only me." But she must learn the lesson of generosity in friendship. She must learn to want her friends to love others. It probably will take her a good while, the lesson will be a long one—but she must learn it because it is in Christ's curriculum for all His students, and no one can get His certificate of graduation without learning it.

Patience is a lesson that has to be learned. An impatient person is not a complete Christian. Thoughtfulness is another necessary lesson. There are a great many thoughtless Christians. The poet tells us that evil is wrought by lack of thought—as well as lack of heart. Many people are always blundering in their relationship and fellowship with others. They say the wrong word, they do the wrong thing. They leave undone the things they ought to have done. They are always hurting other people's feelings, giving pain to gentle hearts. Yet it is all from thoughtlessness. "I didn't mean to offend him. I didn't mean to be unkind. I just never thought." There

are few lessons in Christian life that more people need to learn than this of thoughtfulness.

We have to learn to trust. Worry is a sin. It is probably as great a sin as dishonesty or profanity or bad temper. Yet a good many Christian people worry at first, and one of the most important lessons in Christ's school, is to learn not to worry. Joy is a lesson to be learned. Peace is another. Humility is another. Praise is a great lesson. All of life is a school, and it is in learning these lessons—that Jesus says we shall find rest for your souls. Christ Himself is our teacher, and with Him we should never fail to learn, though it be only slowly. Then as we learn, our lives will grow continually more and more into quietness, peace and Christlikeness. All our questions will be in the faith that accepts God's will as holy and good—even when it is hardest.

**Matthew 11:21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."**

BGT Matthew 11:21 ο α σοι, Χοραζιν, ο α σοι, Βηθσαιδ · τι ε ν Τ ρ κα Σιδ νι γ νοντο α δυν μεις α γεν μεναι ν μ ν, π λαι ν ν σ κκ κα σποδ μετεν ησαν.

KJV Matthew 11:21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

NET Matthew 11:21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

CSB Matthew 11:21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes long ago!

ESV Matthew 11:21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

NIV Matthew 11:21 "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

NLT Matthew 11:21 "What sorrow awaits you, Korazin and Bethsaida! For if the miracles I did in you had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon, their people would have repented of their sins long ago, clothing themselves in burlap and throwing ashes on their heads to show their remorse.

NRS Matthew 11:21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

NJB Matthew 11:21 'Alas for you, Chorazin! Alas for you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

NAB Matthew 11:21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes.

YLT Matthew 11:21 'Woe to thee, Chorazin! woe to thee, Bethsaida! because, if in Tyre and Sidon had been done the mighty works that were done in you, long ago in sackcloth and ashes they had reformed;

GWN Matthew 11:21 "How horrible it will be for you, Chorazin! How horrible it will be for you, Bethsaida! If the miracles worked in you had been worked in Tyre and Sidon, they would have changed the way they thought and acted long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

- **Woe** - Mt 18:7 23:13-29 26:24 Jer 13:27 Lu 11:42-52 Jude 1:11
- **Bethsaida** - Mk 6:45 8:22 Lu 9:10 Joh 1:44 12:21
- **for** - Mt 12:41-42 Eze 3:6,7 Ac 13:44-48 28:25-28
- **repented** - Job 42:6 Joh 3:5-10
- Classic Sermon by Vance Havner [A Judgement is Coming](#)
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 12:41-42+ "The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment (Rev 20:11-15+), and shall condemn it because (term of explanation) they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and **behold**, something greater than Jonah is here. 42 "The Queen of the South shall rise up with this generation at the

judgment and shall condemn it, because (term of explanation) she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and **behold**, something greater than Solomon is here.

Hebrews 10:26-27+ For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.

Luke 10:13-15+ “Woe to you, [Chorazin](#)! Woe to you, [Bethsaida](#)! For if the miracles had been performed in [Tyre and Sidon](#) which occurred in you, they would have repented ([metanoeeo](#)) long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 “But it will be more tolerable ([anektoteros](#)) for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment, than for you. 15 “And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to [Hades](#)!

John 20:30-31+ (NO ACCOUNT OF MIRACLES IN CHORAZIN BUT THIS VERSE CLARIFIES) Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His Name.



Chorazin (Korazin) and Bethsaida  
([Article](#))



Ruins of Chorazin

## LIGHT REJECTED WAS SUFFICIENT TO SAVE

Woe ([ouai](#)) to you, [Chorazin](#)! Woe ([ouai](#)) to you, [Bethsaida](#)! For ([hoti](#) - term of explanation) if the miracles ([dunamis](#)) had occurred in [Tyre and Sidon](#) which occurred in you, they would have repented ([metanoeeo](#)) long ago in sackcloth and ashes ([see note](#)). Woe is the antithesis of blessing offered to those in Mt 11:6 who do not stumble over Jesus! Woe is more like No miracles are mentioned in the Bible in Chorazin, but clearly **miracles occurred** because Jesus stated that they did. Regarding [Bethsaida](#) there is an account of the blind man who was healed (Mk 8:22–26) and Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Philip were from [Bethsaida](#)! God Who knows all things (See [Wayne Grudem's note](#) on this topic), knew [Tyre and Sidon](#) would have repented had they seen the miracles Jesus performed! Note that Jesus' comparison to Tyre and Sidon shows His willingness to forgive even the most sinful people if they truly repent.

*Like Chorazin, people today who hear the Gospel and witness  
God's work in their lives are called to respond in faith.*

[Chorazin](#) today is fertile ground, has an excellent location, but has no people. The site is abandoned as are the other two towns, Bethsaida and Capernaum, where Matthew said Jesus performed most of His miracles.

*Indifference is a terrible form of unbelief. It so totally ignores God*

that He is not even considered worth arguing about.

-- John MacArthur

**William Barclay** - We must be careful to catch the accent in Jesus' voice as he said this... **Woe** to you, Chorazin! **Woe** to you, Bethsaida!" The Greek word for **woe** which we have translated "alas" is **ouai**; and **ouai expresses sorrowful pity at least as much as it does anger**. This is not the accent of one who is in a temper because his self-esteem has been touched; it is not the accent of one who is blazingly angry because he has been insulted. **It is the accent of sorrow**, the accent of one who offered men the most precious thing in the world and saw it disregarded. Jesus' condemnation of sin is holy anger, but the anger comes, not from outraged pride, but from a broken heart. ([Ref](#))

*This showed the universal truth that to whom much is given,  
much is required (cf. Lk 12:48+)*

-- Bob Utley

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - Some cities were more favored with the Lord's presence than others, and therefore he looked for more from them. These cities ought to have repented, or Christ would not have upbraided them: repentance is a duty. The more men hear and see of the Lord's work, the greater is their obligation to repent. Where most is given most is required. Men are responsible for the way in which they treat the Lord Jesus and "his mighty works." There is a time for upbraiding: "Then began he." The most loving preacher will see cause for complaining of his impenitent hearers: HE upbraids, even he who also wept. Repentance is what we who are preachers drive at; and where we do not see it, we are sore troubled. Our trouble is not that our hearers did not applaud our ability, but because they repented not. They have enough to repent of, and without repentance woe is upon them, and therefore we mourn that they do not repent.

Jesus knew what the doom of certain Jewish towns would be; and he knew what certain heathen cities would have done if they had been placed in their favorable circumstances.

He spoke infallibly. Great privileges were lost on Chorazin and Bethsaida, but would have been effectual had they been granted to Tyre and Sidon.

According to our Lord's declaration, God gave the opportunity where it was rejected. and it was not given where it would have been accepted. This is true, but how mysterious! The practical point was the guilt of these favored cities, in that they remained unmoved by visitation which would have converted the heathen Sidonians; yes, and would have made them repent quickly "long ago "; and in the most humiliating manner, "in sackcloth and ashes. " It is a sad fact that our impenitent hearers do despite to a grace which would have brought cannibals to the Savior's feet!

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**Woe** (How dreadful!) ([3759 - click and select "Phonetics" to hear "ouai" pronounced](#)) **ouai** pronounced "oo-ah'ee," an eerie, ominous foreboding sound some say is like the cry of an eagle) is an onomatopoeic word (an imitation of the sound) which serves as an interjection or lamentation (e.g., at funerals 1Ki 13:30) expressing an outburst of emotion, a cry of intense distress, displeasure, pain, sorrow or horror. An exclamation denoting pain or displeasure. Sometime woe was used to attract attention (Isa. 55:1). Less frequently, it occurs as a noun denoting a disaster or calamity. The OT prophets would often open their prophetic utterances of coming divine judgment with the word "Woe!" (Isa. 5:8-10; Mic 2:1-5) An interjection expressing great distress or sorrow; or a noun signifying a condition of deep suffering due to a calamity that has befallen or will befall a person or community. It may convey a warning of impending disaster to the hearers. BDAG - ① interjection denoting pain or displeasure, woe, alas ② a state of intense hardship or distress, woe

Most NT uses of **ouai** are in the context of warning about inevitable, impending judgment, often intermingled with a feeling of pity (Mt 11:21-22, Lk 22:22 = Judas' betrayal). Rev 8:13<sup>+</sup> has woe in triplicate which seems to provide the greatest possible emphasis on God's coming judgment on the world, much as the cry of "holy" in triplicate emphasizes His holiness. Indeed, His perfect holiness demands His perfect judgment! In the Lxx a double woe is addressed to unfaithful Jerusalem because of her idolatry and immorality (Ezek 16:23). **Ouai** does **not** depict sorrow on the part of those who have sinned (as some have mistakenly taught).

**OUI - 47X/36V** - Matt. 11:21; Matt. 18:7; Matt. 23:13; Matt. 23:14; Matt. 23:15; Matt. 23:16; Matt. 23:23; Matt. 23:25; Matt. 23:27; Matt. 23:29; Matt. 24:19; Matt. 26:24; Mk. 13:17; Mk. 14:21; Lk. 6:24; Lk. 6:25; Lk. 6:26; Lk. 10:13; Lk. 11:42; Lk. 11:43; Lk. 11:44; Lk. 11:46; Lk. 11:47; Lk. 11:52; Lk. 17:1; Lk. 21:23; Lk. 22:22; 1 Co. 9:16; Jude 1:11; Rev. 8:13; Rev. 9:12; Rev. 11:14; Rev. 12:12; Rev. 18:10; Rev. 18:16; Rev. 18:19

**Chorazin** - **Chorazin** ([/kɒs'reɪzɪn/](#); [Hebrew](#): כּוֹרַזִּים, **Korazim**; also Karraza, Kh. Karazeh, Chorizim, Kerazeh, Korazin) was an ancient village in northern [Galilee](#), two and a half miles from [Capernaum](#) on a hill above the northern shore of the [Sea of Galilee](#).

**Bethsaida** - Bethsaida, the hometown of Peter, Andrew, and Philip (John 1:44), was a fishing village. Jesus went there often (Mark

6:45; 8:22; Luke 9:10), though we are not told what mighty works He may have done there. Because the Sea of Galilee is so small, Bethsaida was not far distant from Capernaum. Since Bethsaida was the hometown of these disciples, it must have been traumatic for them to hear Jesus' rebuke. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION** - Imagine someone who has the opportunity to witness a powerful life transformation, like a person overcoming addiction or a family experiencing reconciliation after years of conflict. The individual sees the change, hears the testimonies, and even sees miracles of healing or restoration, but remains indifferent, skeptical, or unwilling to change their own life. They continue in their old habits and patterns, despite seeing the positive effects of change in others. Contrast this with someone from a background of hardship or brokenness—perhaps someone who has been through addiction, trauma, or poverty—who, upon seeing a similar transformation, feels deeply moved and repents, seeking to change their life. This person recognizes the power of the transformation and responds with humility, making changes in their own life. In this real-life scenario, the person who is indifferent despite witnessing change resembles the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida. They have seen miracles (the powerful transformation), but they do not repent or take action. Meanwhile, those who are more broken or aware of their need for change—like Tyre and Sidon in the verse—are more likely to respond with humility and repentance, recognizing the opportunity to change and seeking a new way forward.

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**John MacArthur - UNBELIEVING INDIFFERENCE: CHORAZIN AND BETHSAIDA**—Mt 11:21–22 [Daily Readings From the Life of Christ Volumes 1-3 - Page 12](#)

Indifference is a terrible form of unbelief. It so totally ignores God that He is not even considered worth arguing about. As Josiah realized after God's people rediscovered His book, "great is the wrath of the Lord that burns against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book" (2 Kings 22:13; cf. Matt. 22:5–6, 14).

*It is better to have never heard about Jesus than to hear and yet reject Him*

Probably most citizens of Chorazin and Bethsaida had seen Christ's miracles, and others knew about them from reports of friends and relatives. But relatively few responded in saving faith (cf. Matt. 7:13–14). Hence the Lord's righteous wrath came down on them with exclamations of woe for their unrepentance. It is better to have never heard about Jesus than to hear and yet reject Him (cf. Heb. 10:26–27).

By contrast, Jesus tells us that pagan, corrupt cities such as Tyre and Sidon would have repented early on had they heard Jesus' message and seen His miracles. Few statements such as this from the Messiah would have shocked the Jews more than to be unfavorably compared to sinful Gentiles. At the great white throne, God will judge unbelievers from all eras, sentencing them to eternal punishment. At that time, many from places like Tyre and Sidon will fare better than unbelieving Jews. The greater the privilege God offers people, the greater the responsibility they have. The greater the light they see, the worse the consequences for not receiving it.

**ASK YOURSELF** Does your church bear the marks of people who have grown lackadaisical in faith and protectively focused on side issues, or people who are active and animated in their love for the Lord? How can you be part of encouraging faithful zeal in those familiar with Christian faith?

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**QUESTION - [What is the significance of Chorazin in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)**

**ANSWER** - Chorazin, or Korazim, was a city in the Upper Galilee region sitting upon a hill above the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, close to [Capernaum](#). Along with Bethsaida and Capernaum, Chorazin was part of the "evangelical triangle" of cities where Jesus Christ most commonly walked, taught, and performed miracles during His earthly ministry. Though it was the location of many signs and wonders, Jesus ultimately cursed the city due to the lack of faith and continued sin of its inhabitants.

#### **Jesus' "Woe" to Chorazin**

The Gospel of Matthew provides an account of the lack of repentance of Chorazin: "Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you'" (Matthew 11:20–22). An additional account of this "woe" is recorded in Luke 10:13–14. Those two passages are the only times Chorazin is mentioned in the Bible.

Though the specific [miracles](#) Jesus performed in Chorazin are not specified in the Bible, the people there had a front-row seat for

“most” of them. It would seem that the people of Chorazin would have had greater faith and a deeper level of repentance than others, but that was not the case.

Later, Jesus placed a curse on a [fig tree](#) near Jerusalem (Mark 11:12–26). The tree, which was barren of fruit, was symbolic of the nation of Israel, who rejected their Messiah. Much the same way, Chorazin failed to heed the teaching of Jesus or respond to His work.

### **Held to a Higher Standard**

Jesus contrasted Chorazin with the pagan Phoenician cities of [Tyre and Sidon](#). Jesus says that judgment day will be “more bearable” for Tyre and Sidon than for Chorazin. The reason is simple: if given the same opportunity to witness the Lord’s miracles, those pagan cities would have repented and turned from their sin. Instead, Chorazin failed to repent and effectively rejected the gospel that Jesus was preaching. The people of Chorazin had been given much light, and they were responsible to open their eyes and see.

The same principle is found in Luke 12, where Jesus said, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (verse 48). Chorazin witnessed the miracles of Jesus firsthand, and they heard the gospel message preached directly from His lips. They had been entrusted with much, and from them much was demanded.

### **Destruction of Chorazin**

The woe that Jesus pronounced on Chorazin was ultimately fulfilled. The town, usually identified as the modern site of the Khirbet Karrassa ruins, was deserted by the time of the historian Eusebius in the fourth century (*Onomasticon*, entry for “Chorazin”). Chorazin serves as evidence of the consequences of continued sin and unrepentance. We are all responsible for the light we have been given. And God “commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

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### **QUESTION - [Why did Jesus reference Chorazin and Bethsaida in Matthew 11:21?](#)**

**ANSWER** - In Matthew 11, Jesus pronounces judgment on the people for rejecting Him. Specifically, He proclaimed woes on the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida (Matthew 11:21) because He worked miracles in those cities, and they still rejected Him. Chorazin was a city in [Galilee](#), a territory in which He worked many miracles (Matthew 4:23). Bethsaida was also in Galilee, northeast of the Lake of Galilee. Bethsaida was the hometown of Philip, Andrew, and Peter (John 1:44), and Jesus went there on many occasions.

Galilee had prophetic significance, as it was said that the people (including those east of the Jordan and in Galilee) who walked in great darkness would see a great light (Isaiah 9:1–2). The [Messiah](#) was that great light, and He did great things in the region of Galilee. Yet, rather than embrace their Messiah, the cities of Galilee rejected Him. Jesus exclaimed that, if He had done in Tyre and Sidon the miracles He did in Chorazin and Bethsaida, Tyre and Sidon would have repented quickly (Matthew 11:21). Even Capernaum was judged—another Galilean city. If the miracles Jesus had done in Capernaum were done in Sodom, He said, Sodom would have repented (Matthew 11:23).

These cities and the people in them would be accountable for their rejection of the Messiah. Chorazin and Bethsaida are mentioned as some of the vilest cities because of the great opportunity that they wasted. Their Messiah had come. He had healed their sick. He had presented them with the kingdom. He came with the good news that they could change their mind about how they might be righteous in God’s sight. He offered them righteousness by grace through belief in Him. He offered a new birth and a place in His kingdom. Instead of changing their minds as He required, they rejected Him as their Messiah. That generation would be held accountable, Jesus said, and the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida would be judged even more harshly than Tyre and Sidon. Capernaum would encounter less tolerable judgment than even Sodom had endured.

Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and all of Galilee serve as a cautionary tale in Matthew 11. They were given a great light and had an incredible opportunity to see firsthand the miracle-working of the Messiah. While we haven’t had that same opportunity to be eyewitnesses of His earthly ministry, we have His Word that testifies of Him. Will we make the same mistakes as Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and the other cities that rejected Him, or will we embrace our Savior and receive God’s righteousness by believing in Him?

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### **QUESTION - [What is the significance of Bethsaida in the Bible?](#)**

**ANSWER** - Bethsaida was a small town in [Galilee](#) best known in the Bible as the birthplace of three of Jesus’ disciples: Phillip, Peter, and Andrew (John 1:44–45; 12:21). Some scholars suggest that there were two towns called Bethsaida during the time of Jesus, as two cities’ having the same or a similar name was common in those days. The Bethsaida most often referred to in Scripture was located near where the Jordan River flows into the Sea of Galilee on the north side of the sea.

Bethsaida was the scene of several miracles, enough that Jesus could say, “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes” (Matthew 11:21). Bethsaida has come to represent those who have heard the gospel, understood God’s plan of salvation, and rejected it. Jesus implied that their eternal punishment would be harsher than that of those who did not have such a privilege (Matthew 11:22).

One of those miracles performed in Bethsaida was the restoration of sight to a blind man (Mark 8:22–26). It is also likely that the feeding of the 5,000 took place near Bethsaida (Luke 9:10–17). It was also the site of one of Jesus’ most famous miracles: walking on water (Mark 6:45–52). He had sent His disciples on ahead on the Sea of Galilee toward Bethsaida while He spent some time in prayer. Late that night, a strong wind made rowing the boat difficult. In the midst of the disciples’ efforts to keep the boat afloat, they saw a figure coming toward them on top of the waves! They were terrified until Jesus got in the boat with them and the waves instantly calmed. It was on His way to Bethsaida that Jesus walked on water.

Bethsaida is rarely mentioned after Jesus [ascended into heaven](#). Most scholars believe that Bethsaida was renamed Julias (in honor of Augustus’s daughter) by Philip the tetrarch, grandson of Herod the Great, at some point during Jesus’ public ministry. However, all mention of the city disappeared by the second century, and only buried ruins remain.

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**QUESTION - [What is the meaning of sackcloth and ashes?](#)**

**ANSWER** - Sackcloth and ashes were used in Old Testament times as a symbol of debasement, mourning, and/or [repentance](#). Someone wanting to show his repentant heart would often wear sackcloth, sit in ashes, and put ashes on top of his head. Sackcloth was a coarse material usually made of black goat’s hair, making it quite uncomfortable to wear. The ashes signified desolation and ruin.

When someone died, the act of putting on sackcloth showed heartfelt sorrow for the loss of that person. We see an example of this when David mourned the death of Abner, the commander of Saul’s army (2 Samuel 3:31). Jacob also demonstrated his grief by wearing sackcloth when he thought his son Joseph had been killed (Genesis 37:34). These instances of mourning for the dead mention sackcloth but not ashes.

Ashes accompanied sackcloth in times of national disaster or repenting from sin. Esther 4:1, for instance, describes Mordecai tearing his clothes, putting on sackcloth and ashes, and walking out into the city “wailing loudly and bitterly.” This was Mordecai’s reaction to King Xerxes’ declaration giving the wicked Haman authority to destroy the Jews (see Esther 3:8–15). Mordecai was not the only one who grieved. “In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes” (Esther 4:3). The Jews responded to the devastating news concerning their race with sackcloth and ashes, showing their intense grief and distress.

Sackcloth and ashes were also used as a public sign of repentance and humility before God. When Jonah declared to the people of Nineveh that God was going to destroy them for their wickedness, everyone from the king on down responded with repentance, fasting, and sackcloth and ashes (Jonah 3:5–7). They even put sackcloth on their animals (verse 8). Their reasoning was, “Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish” (verse 9). This is interesting because the Bible never says that Jonah’s message included any mention of God’s mercy; but mercy is what they received. It’s clear that the Ninevites’ donning of sackcloth and ashes was not a meaningless show. God saw genuine change—a humble change of heart represented by the sackcloth and ashes—and it caused Him to “relent” and not bring about His plan to destroy them (Jonah 3:10).

Other people the Bible mentions wearing sackcloth include King Hezekiah (Isaiah 37:1), Eliakim (2 Kings 19:2), King Ahab (1 Kings 21:27), the elders of Jerusalem (Lamentations 2:10), Daniel (Daniel 9:3), and the two witness in Revelation 11:3.

Very simply, sackcloth and ashes were used as an outward sign of one’s inward condition. Such a symbol made one’s change of heart visible and demonstrated the sincerity of one’s grief and/or repentance. It was not the act of putting on sackcloth and ashes itself that moved God to intervene, but the humility that such an action demonstrated (see 1 Samuel 16:7). God’s forgiveness in response to genuine repentance is celebrated by David’s words: “You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy” (Psalm 30:11). [GotQuestions.org](#)

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**QUESTION - [Why did Jesus mention Tyre and Sidon?](#)**

**ANSWER** - [Tyre](#) and [Sidon](#), ancient cities of Phoenicia, are mentioned several times in both the Old and New Testaments. Jesus mentions Tyre and Sidon in [Luke 10](#) in the context of judgments He was pronouncing against the cities of [Chorazin](#) and [Bethsaida](#).

Tyre and Sidon are port cities located in modern [Lebanon](#) on the Mediterranean coast. Sidon is believed to have existed prior to

2000 BC, with Tyre being just a little younger. The Old Testament mentions Israel's dealings with these cities, including the Israelites' failure to conquer Sidon in the conquest of the Promised Land (Judges 1:31), their worship of Sidonian gods on several occasions (Judges 10:6–16; 1 Kings 11), and their obtaining materials from Sidon and Tyre for the building of the temple (1 Chronicles 22:4). King Hiram of Tyre provided many of the temple furnishings for Solomon (1 Kings 7:13–51). Tyrians and Sidonians are also mentioned in helping rebuild the temple in Ezra's time (Ezra 3:7). [Queen Jezebel](#) was a Sidonian (1 Kings 16:31). The Sidonian city of Zarephath was where a [widow](#) took care of Elijah and the Lord provided oil and flour for her through the famine; later, the widow's son became ill, and Elijah raised him from the dead (1 Kings 17:8–24).

The Old Testament also has several prophecies against Tyre and Sidon that predicted a complete overthrow (Isaiah 23; Jeremiah 25; 27; 47; Ezekiel 26–28; Joel 3; Amos 1:9–10; Zechariah 9:1–4). Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre from 585–572 BC. Alexander the Great conquered Tyre in 322 BC, completely destroying the city. The Persian king Artaxerxes conquered Sidon. In short, God's prophesied judgment came to pass. Later, both cities became prosperous provinces of Rome.

Tyre and Sidon were Gentile cities north of Israel, and Jesus had been sent to the Jews (Matthew 15:24). But Jesus still ministered to them: crowds from Tyre and Sidon came to see and listen to Him (Mark 3:7–8). Jesus helped a [Syrophenician woman](#) and commended her faith (Matthew 15:21–28).

Jesus mentions Tyre and Sidon in Luke 10:13–14 (see also Matthew 11:20–24), comparing them to several cities in which He had performed miracles. These cities of Israel had been blessed with Jesus' presence, preaching, and power, yet they had not repented. Jesus pronounces woes on them, stating that Tyre and Sidon, given the same opportunity, would have turned from their wickedness and been saved: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you." Jesus also says [Capernaum](#) is under God's judgment for their rejection of Christ (verse 15), because "whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me" (verse 16).

Jesus used the pagan cities of Tyre and Sidon to highlight the way God's chosen people refused Him. The Israelites of Jesus' day believed themselves to be righteously following God, yet they did not recognize God in their midst. Jesus, in essence, shamed Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum—they, who were supposed to be God's representatives on earth, refused to listen; yet pagan cities would have quickly repented. Jesus' comments demonstrate the importance of responsibility and stewardship. "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48).

God's desire is for His Word to be known and believed, with the result that people are transformed (see Luke 6:46). To reject the light we've been given is to remain in darkness. To spurn the grace of God and reject the Savior is to receive the due penalty for our sin.

**Matthew 11:22 "Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you."**

BGT Matthew 11:22 πλ ν λ γω μ ν, Τ ρ κα Σιδ νι νεκτ τερον σται ν μ ρ κρ σεωσ μ ν.

KJV Matthew 11:22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

NET Matthew 11:22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you!

CSB Matthew 11:22 But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.

ESV Matthew 11:22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

NIV Matthew 11:22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.

NLT Matthew 11:22 I tell you, Tyre and Sidon will be better off on judgment day than you.

NRS Matthew 11:22 But I tell you, on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

NJB Matthew 11:22 Still, I tell you that it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on Judgement Day than for

you.

NAB Matthew 11:22 But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.

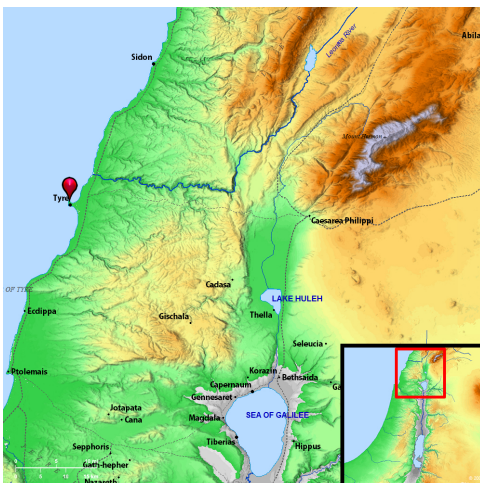
YLT Matthew 11:22 but I say to you, to Tyre and Sidon it shall be more tolerable in a day of judgment than for you.

GWN Matthew 11:22 I can guarantee that judgment day will be better for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

- It shall - Mt 11:24 10:15 Lu 10:14 12:47,48 Heb 2:3 6:4-8 10:26-31
- Tyre - Isa 23:1-18 Jer 25:22 27:3 Eze 26:1-28:26 29:18 Am 1:9,10 Zec 9:2,3
- the day - Mt 12:36 2Pe 2:9 3:7 1Jn 4:17
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Revelation 20:11-15+ (**THE DAY OF JUDGMENT**) And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.



[Tyre and Sidon](#)  
(Click to Enlarge)

## JUDGMENT PROPORTIONAL TO LIGHT REJECTED

Nevertheless (term of contrast) I say to you, it will be more tolerable ([anektoteros](#)) for [Tyre and Sidon](#) in the day of judgment ([krisis](#)) than for you - Jesus is still addressing [Chorazin](#) and [Bethsaida](#) explaining why eternal punishment will be less tolerable (in other words greater) for these two cities and the reason is because these cities in Israel had greater light than the pagan cities. Not only did they reject the message of Jesus' miracles (which pointed to Him as the Son of God) but they also rejected the very Person Who is the Light of the World (Jn 8:12+). It is interesting that one of the terrors of hell is eternal darkness, absence of light, as well as the absence of God (Mt 8:12+; Mt 22:13+; Jude 1:13+). It is as if God gives these cities exactly what they wanted. They choose spiritual darkness during their life and so God will give them physical (and spiritual) darkness in their death! **The day of judgment** is almost like a play on words because **judgment** is the Greek word [krisis](#), the root word of our English word **crisis**. A **crisis** is a time of intense difficulty, danger, or uncertainty that requires immediate attention or action to resolve. These Christ-rejecting cities would experience an "**eternal crisis**" from which there would be no reprieve or resolution...forever!

**THOUGHT-** Clearly there will be various degrees or gradations of eternal punishment depending in part on how much Gospel light was rejected. The greater the light, the greater the degree of punishment. I think of this every time I speak the Gospel to a person and they reject it. If they go their entire life and never repent and believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord, they will be faced with eternal punishment worse than the horribly

abominable city of Sodom! Rejection of the Gospel is a very painful thought to me, especially if I am in a situation where I frequently see that individual to whom I have witnessed. Of course I can still continue to pray for their salvation even if they have soundly rejected the presentation of the Gospel. Interestingly, Sodom's judgment came without warning but at least these Jewish cities received clear warning of coming judgment.

**D A Carson** - There are degrees of felicity in paradise and degrees of torment in hell (Matthew 12:41; 23:13; cf. Luke 12:47-48), a point Paul well understood (Romans 1:20-2:16). The implications for Western, English speaking Christendom today are sobering." ([Matthew](#))

**Spurgeon** - Hearing and rejecting the gospel is the crowning sin of all. Whatever else men are guilty of, if they have not rejected Christ, they have not yet reached the summit of iniquity.

*The sin is in proportion to the light. Those who perish with salvation sounding in their ears perish with a vengeance.*

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** -Terrible as the hell of these two sinful cities will be, their punishment will be more bearable than the sentence passed on cities of Galilee where Jesus taught and wrought miracles of love. The sin is in proportion to the light. Those who perish with salvation sounding in their ears perish with a vengeance. Assuredly the day of judgment will be notable for surprises. Who would have thought to see Bethsaida sink lower than Sidon? Believers will not in the day of judgment be surprised, for they will remember in that day our Lord's "I say unto you. "

**William Hendriksen** - As there are degrees of glory (1 Cor. 15:41, 42), so there are also degrees of punishment (Luke 12:47, 48). Sodom, to be sure, sinned grievously (Gen. 13:13; 19:9, 13; Isa. 3:9; Lam. 4:6; 2 Peter 2:6, 7; Jude 7); but the cities selected by the Lord Jesus Christ for receiving the very special privilege of having his personal representatives sent to them with a pleading and urgent appeal will have sinned even more grievously if they reject their golden opportunity. Therefore, in the day of the final judgment their sentence will be even more terrifying than that which will then be pronounced on Sodom. (Borrow [Exposition of the Gospel of Luke](#))

*We are not sinners because we are skeptics.*

*We are skeptics because we are sinners.*

-- Vance Havner

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**More tolerable** (414) **anektoteros** from **anechomai** from **ana** + **echo** - to hold oneself up against, put up with, forbear, suffer. gen. anektotérou, masc. adj., the comparative of anektós, tolerable, **from anechomai** = to bear) means bearable, endurable, tolerable, sufferable, easier to bear. Able to be endured. The word is used in a Christian letter of the 4th century to describe a sick lady who has gotten better: "Her condition seems to be more tolerable (anektoteron), as she can sit up"

**ANEKTOTEROS - 5V** - Matt. 10:15; Matt. 11:22; Matt. 11:24; Lk. 10:12; Lk. 10:14

**Judgment** (justice, court, sentence)(2920) **krisis** from **krino** = to judge, decide) means a decision or judgment, verdict, justice, court (tribunal). The first use is by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount declaring "'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the **court.**" ("in danger of judgment") (Mt 5:21, cp also Mt 5:22) Mt 10:15, 11:22, 24 all describe Jesus' sobering warning to the Jews of a specific future and frightening "day of **judgment.**" (cp "**sentence** of hell" Mt 23:33, see also 2 Peter 2:9, 11, 3:7, 1 John 4:17) In Jn 5:24 Jesus gives sinners the way of escape, the way to miss the horrible day of **judgment** (Heb 10:27)! In Mt 12:18 God's **judgment** is equated with **justice**, for He is the righteous and just Judge (cp Mt 12:20, 23:23, Rev 16:7). Note the striking contrast in Jn 5:29 "those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of **judgment.**" There is no such thing as reincarnation but only one life, one death, one **judgment** (Heb 9:27)

**Krisis** - 47x/46v - **court(2), judgment(38), judgments(2), justice(4), sentence(1)**. Matt. 5:21; Matt. 5:22; Matt. 10:15; Matt. 11:22; Matt. 11:24; Matt. 12:18; Matt. 12:20; Matt. 12:36; Matt. 12:41; Matt. 12:42; Matt. 23:23; Matt. 23:33; Lk. 10:14; Lk. 11:31; Lk. 11:32; Lk. 11:42; Jn. 3:19; Jn. 5:22; Jn. 5:24; Jn. 5:27; Jn. 5:29; Jn. 5:30; Jn. 7:24; Jn. 8:16; Jn. 12:31; Jn. 16:8; Jn. 16:11; Acts 8:33; 2 Thess. 1:5; 1 Tim. 5:24; Heb. 9:27; Heb. 10:27; Jas. 2:13; Jas. 5:12; 2 Pet. 2:4; 2 Pet. 2:9; 2 Pet. 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:7; 1 Jn. 4:17; Jude 1:6; Jude 1:9; Jude 1:15; Rev. 14:7; Rev. 16:7; Rev. 18:10; Rev. 19:2

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## The Rocks Of Unbelief

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. — Psalm 19:7

Today's Scripture : Matthew 11:20-24

Rocks. That's all that's left of the city of Chorazin. Just the rubble of a few buildings made of volcanic rock—yet this was once a thriving city on the Sea of Galilee.

Not far from Chorazin is another pile of rocks—the former city of Capernaum.

Same with Bethsaida. Once a bustling city where children played, men did business, and mothers ran households. Rocks. Nothing but rocks.

When Jesus walked the streets of those cities, He knew this would happen. In Matthew 11:21-23, He said, “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! . . . And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades.”

In those cities, Jesus clearly showed Himself to be the Son of God—the One who had almighty power and could perform miracles. But the people refused to listen to His message. As a result, Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida were cursed by God and reduced to heaps of rocks—monuments to unbelief.

The lesson for us today is clear. When Jesus speaks, we must take His words to heart. In fact, all of Scripture needs to be taken seriously. To disregard God's Word shows a heart of unbelief and will leave our lives in ruins. But to heed its life-giving instruction brings reward and blessing. By: Dave Branon (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Help me, Lord, be on my guard  
Lest unbelief of heart  
Should cause my feet to go astray,  
And from your truth depart.  
—DJD

To ignore the Bible is to invite disaster.

**Matthew 11:23 “And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.**

BGT Matthew 11:23 κα σ , Καφαρναο μ, μ ως ο ρανο ψωθ σ ; ως δου καταβ σ · πι ε ν Σοδ μοις γεν θησαν α δυν μεις α γεν μεναι ν σο , μεινεν ν μ χρι τ ς σ μερον.

KJV Matthew 11:23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

NET Matthew 11:23 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be thrown down to Hades! For if the miracles done among you had been done in Sodom, it would have continued to this day.

CSB Matthew 11:23 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until today.

ESV Matthew 11:23 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

NIV Matthew 11:23 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.

NLT Matthew 11:23 "And you people of Capernaum, will you be honored in heaven? No, you will go down to the place of the dead. For if the miracles I did for you had been done in wicked Sodom, it would still be here today.

NRS Matthew 11:23 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades. For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

NJB Matthew 11:23 And as for you, Capernaum, did you want to be raised as high as heaven? You shall be flung down to hell. For if the miracles done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have been standing yet.

NAB Matthew 11:23 And as for you, Capernaum: 'Will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to the

netherworld.' For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

YLT Matthew 11:23 'And thou, Capernaum, which unto the heaven wast exalted, unto hades shalt be brought down, because if in Sodom had been done the mighty works that were done in thee, it had remained unto this day;

GWN Matthew 11:23 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to heaven? No, you will go down to hell! If the miracles that had been worked in you had been worked in Sodom, it would still be there today.

- **Capernaum** - Mt 4:13 Mt 8:5 Mt 17:24 Lu 4:23 Joh 4:46-54
- **which** - Isa 14:13-15 La 2:1 Eze 28:12-19 31:16,17 Ob 1:4 Lu 14:11 2Pe 2:4-9
- **in Sodom** - Ge 13:13 19:24,25 Eze 16:48-50 Jude 1:7 Rev 11:8
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 4:13+ and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.



Ruins of Synagogue at Capernaum

### THE SAD PROPHESED PLIGHT OF CAPERNAUM

And you, **Capernaum** ("Nahum's village"), **will not be exalted** ([hupsoo](#)) **to heaven, will you?** - The Greek expects a negative answer! Capernaum would not ascend to Heaven but tragically would descend to Hades.

[Brian Bell](#) reminds that "5 out of 10 miracles in ch's 8 & 9 were performed in Capernaum (including [raising of Jairus' daughter](#)). [the brighter the light the greater the responsibility]

**You will descend to Hades** ([hades](#)); **for** ([hoti](#)) **if the miracles** ([dunamis](#)) **had occurred in Sodom** **which occurred in you, it would have remained** ([meno](#)) **to this day** - Jesus asks, then answers, and then explains why Capernaum would be judged more severely than abominable Sodom. Imagine the reaction of the original hearers of Jesus' words in effect making Capernaum lower than Sodom! One is surprised they did not attempt to stone Him! What is so sad is that **Capernaum** was Jesus' headquarters and had as much light as any city in the history of the world. And yet most of the city rejected His light.

*The Lord was making the point  
that there is accountability in opportunity.*

--Rod Mattoon

**Phil Newton** - "**Miracles**" is a technical term in the Gospels that refers to the displays of divine power for the purpose of attesting Christ as Son of God and Redeemer of sinners. These were not miracles for the sake of miracles but demonstrations of the power of God - the same power that could raise sinners from the dead to real life. While the theme of judgment runs strongly in this text, there is clearly the companion reality. "*God never announces judgement [sic] until He has first given us a full opportunity,*" explains Martyn Lloyd-Jones [borrow [The Heart of the Gospel, 99](#)]. Before the woes came opportunities to repent of sins and follow Christ. And they had grand opportunities indeed, for Christ walked among them. ([The Face of the Non-repentant](#))

**Spurgeon** - Capernaum, his own city, the headquarters of the army of salvation, had seen and heard the Son of God...therefore he

mourned to see Capernaum remain as hardened as ever.”

**William Barclay** - “These cities did not attack Jesus Christ; they did not drive him from their gates; they did not seek to crucify him; they simply disregarded him. Neglect can kill as much as persecution can.”

**Bob Utley** - The phrase found in verse 23 related this to Isa. 14:13–15 and Ezek. 28:12–16. In these verses the pride of the Kings of Babylon and Tyre were used as examples of the pride of Satan. “**IF**” is a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is called “contrary to fact.” This should then be translated, “If the miracles had occurred in Sodom, which occurred in you (but they did not), then it would have remained to this day, (which it did not).”

**NET Note** - The allusion to Sodom, the most wicked of OT cities from Gen 19:1–29, shows that to reject the current message is even more serious than the worst sins of the old era and will result in more severe punishment.

**Adrian Rogers** - Now the sin of sodomy is unspeakably immoral; but there is a greater sin than the sin of sodomy, and it is to sin against the light, to refuse the light, because the Holy Spirit is the One that brings light. And when you wound Him, when you misuse Him, when you abuse Him, when you blaspheme Him, then there’s no more light. And no more light means that you can’t be saved. You see, you need more than sight; you need light! Again, I want to tell you, men are not going to be judged primarily by the sin they’ve committed, but by the light that they have rejected.

*Those foul sinners of the accursed Sodom, had they beheld the miracles of Christ, would have so forsaken their sins that their city would have been spared.*

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - The warning to Capernaum is, if possible, still more emphatic, for Sodom was actually destroyed by fire from heaven. Capernaum, his own city, the head-quarters of the army of salvation, had seen and heard the Son of God: he had done in it that which even Sodomites would have felt; and yet it remained unmoved. Those foul sinners of the accursed Sodom, had they beheld the miracles of Christ, would have so forsaken their sins that their city would have been spared. Jesus knew that it would have been so; and therefore he mourned to see Capernaum remain as hardened as ever. Because of this rejection of special privilege, the city which had been exalted unto heaven would be brought as low in punishment as it had been raised high in privilege. May none of our favored English race perish in the same condemnation! Alas, how much we fear that millions of them will do so!

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**Hades** (86) **hades** is the transliteration of the Greek word **Hades** (from **a** = negative + **eido** = to see) literally means "not seen" or "unseen". As noted the understanding of Hades is somewhat confusing, as it changes meaning somewhat from as one moves from the uses in the Old Testament into the uses in the New Testament. In the OT Hades is called **she'ol**. The Greeks named the god of the underworld, the realm of the dead, Hades.

- See [2+ page article on Hades in the New International Dictionary of NT Theology, volume 2 page 206](#)
- See [Article on Hades in Zodiates' Word Study NT Dictionary page 80](#) (borrow)

That said, in the OT **Hades** was used most often to describe the region of ALL departed souls. Everyone who died, whether righteous or unrighteous, is described as departing to **Hades**. But as we move into the NT, we see the progressive revelation of the term, so that **Hades** gains a more restricted sense and refers not to the place of ALL who die (believers and unbelievers as in the OT) but only to the abode of unbelievers. In other words, in the NT **Hades** comes to be synonymous with what we refer to as **Hell**. But to confuse the picture a little, you must realize that even in this meaning **Hades** is only a "temporary holding tank" so to speak, because as shown in Rev 20:14+ **Hades** will cease to exist when it is thrown into the Lake of fire. Don't be confused. **Hell** is permanent and in Scripture is clearly described as such. The unrighteous dead will be resurrected in their bodies (The "Second Resurrection" - see Births, Deaths, and Resurrections) at the Great White Throne judgment in Revelation 20:11-15+ and after being judged for their deeds in the body (to determine the degree of punishment in Hell), they are thrown into the Lake of fire which is synonymous with **Gehenna**. And as discussed below, **Hades** is also thrown into the Lake of fire (thus the reason it is referred to as temporary) and is never again described in Scripture.

Other thoughts on Hades - In Homer **hades** is spelled **Haidēs** and means obscure, dark, invisible (Homer Iliad 23.244 ["house of Hades"]). **Hades** is used in the Septuagint where it translates the Hebrew words for **Sheol** and for **death**, once for silence (Ps 94:17, 115:17). **Hades** was the name of Greek god of underworld and then the term for the underworld itself. **Hades** is pictured as a prison for which Jesus holds the keys (Rev 1:18+).

Friberg's simple summary of Hades (literally unseen place) (1) the place of the dead underworld (Acts 2.27, 32); (2) usually in the NT as the temporary underworld prison where the souls of the ungodly await the judgment (Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Lk. 10:15; Lk. 16:23); (3) personified as following along after Death (Rev 6.8,

#### Related Resources:

- [What is the difference between Sheol, Hades, Hell, the lake of fire, Paradise, and Abraham's bosom?](#)
- [Where did Old Testament believers/saints go when they died?](#)

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**D L Moody** - A MAN said to me some time ago: "Don't you think David fell as low as Saul?" Yes, he fell lower, because God had lifted him up higher. The difference is that when Saul fell there was no sign of repentance, but when David fell, a wail went up from his broken heart, there was true repentance.

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**John Butler** - If you disregard your spiritual opportunities and privileges it will someday come back to haunt you.

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**Wayne Grudem - God Knows All Things Possible.** The definition of God's knowledge given above also specifies that God knows "all things possible." **This is because there are some instances in Scripture where God gives information about events that might happen but that do not actually come to pass.....**Jesus could state that Tyre and Sidon would have repented if Jesus' own miracles had been done there in former days: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (Matt. 11:21). Similarly, he says, "And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to [Hades](#). For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day" (Matt. 11:23; cf. 2 Ki 13:19, where Elisha tells what would have happened if King Joash had struck the ground five or six times with the arrows). The fact that God knows all things possible can also be deduced from God's full knowledge of himself. If God fully knows himself, he knows everything he is able to do, which includes all things that are possible. This fact is indeed amazing. God has made an incredibly complex and varied universe—as is evident, for example, when we observe the remarkable variety of animals in a zoo or fish in an aquarium. But there are thousands upon thousands of other variations or kinds of animals and fish and other things that God could have created but did not. God's infinite knowledge includes detailed knowledge of what each of those other possible creations would have been like and what would have happened in each of them! "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it" (Ps. 139:6). "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:9). ([Systematic Theology page 152](#) or [here](#))

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**John MacArthur - UNBELIEVING INDIFFERENCE: CAPERNAUM**—Mt 11:23 [Daily Readings From the Life of Christ Volumes 1-3 - Page 13](#)

Often those who have opportunity for the greatest spiritual privileges take those most for granted and enjoy them least. Such could be said for the Galilean city of Capernaum. It was the area where Christ made His headquarters and performed more miracles and preached more messages than in any other region during His earthly ministry. Yet all of this marvelous activity apparently had little impact on the indifferent citizens.

Had all of it happened in and around Sodom, Jesus says, that infamously wicked city would have repented, turned in faith to God, and been spared destruction. Even secular people know Sodom as a synonym for moral degradation and a place where homosexuality and other perversions were rampant. On the other hand, Capernaum, like many modern cities, probably had mostly law-abiding, decent residents.

Capernaum exceeded Chorazin and Bethsaida in advantage, and Sodom exceeded Tyre and Sidon in sinfulness. By such striking contrasts, our Lord shows that people most blessed by God will be most punished if they spurn Him. Judgment against the spiritual aloofness of Capernaum will far exceed judgment against the egregious sins of Sodom. The sober truth is that the self-righteous, orthodox person is more repugnant to the Father than the externally immoral, unbelieving person.

Johann Bengel once noted, "Every hearer of the New Testament truth is either much happier or much more wretched than the men who lived before Christ's coming." Such people are either more secure or more condemned.

ASK YOURSELF What is the basis for any feelings we have of superiority and supremacy? What are some of the best cures for this type of sin? Which remedies would you prefer to choose for yourself, rather than having some of the more extreme ones thrust upon you?

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**Matthew 11:24** "Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you."

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BGT Matthew 11:24 πλ ν λ γ ω μ ν τ ι γ Σοδ μων νεκτ τερον σται ν μ ρ κρ σεως σο .

KJV Matthew 11:24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

NET Matthew 11:24 But I tell you, it will be more bearable for the region of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you!"

CSB Matthew 11:24 But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

ESV Matthew 11:24 But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."

NIV Matthew 11:24 But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

NLT Matthew 11:24 I tell you, even Sodom will be better off on judgment day than you."

NRS Matthew 11:24 But I tell you that on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for you."

NJB Matthew 11:24 Still, I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on Judgement Day than for you.'

NAB Matthew 11:24 But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

YLT Matthew 11:24 but I say to you, to the land of Sodom it shall be more tolerable in a day of judgment than to thee.'

- more - Mt 11:22 10:15 La 4:6 Mk 6:11 Lu 10:12
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## HELL "COOLER" FOR SODOM

**Nevertheless** (term of contrast) **I say to you (+) that it will be more tolerable ([anektoteros](#)) for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment ([krisis](#)), than for you** - To say "hell" will be cooler for Sodom is of course relative! Jesus judgement against Capernaum was so severe because this city was His headquarters and had received abundant gospel light. Sodom by comparison had received very little spiritual light for the witness of Lot of compromised Lot was compromised and dim!

*At the judgment men are judged, not primarily by the sin they have committed, but by the light they have rejected.*

--Adrian Rogers

It is intriguing that while Jesus clearly condemns Capernaum, we have no record that the town's people condemned or vilified Jesus, contrary to places like His hometown of Nazareth which attempted to kill Him! Nevertheless Jesus' words make it clear that Capernaum rejected His message despite all of the miracles they witnessed.

**THOUGHT** - Once again we see the clear message that miracles do not save! This truth in Mt 11:20-24 obliterates the argument of the skeptic who says "If I could see a few miracles, I would believe." The fact is they would not believe!

*To reject the gospel of the Son of God-is to create for one's self a sevenfold hell.*

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - What Sodom will endure when the great Judge of all appoints the doom of the wicked, we may not try to realize; but it will be somewhat less than the penalty inflicted upon those who have sinned against the light, and rejected the testimony of the Lord from heaven. To reject the gospel of the Son of God-is to create for one's self a sevenfold hell. Here, again, our Lord speaks from his own full authority, with "I say unto you. " He speaks what he knows: he will himself be the Judge. So far our Lord spake in heaviness of heart; but his brow cleared when he came to the glorious doctrine of election in the next verse.

**Spurgeon** - Remember with deep concern that God is angry with you now. This statement is no invention of mine, it is written by the

pen of inspiration that "God is angry with the wicked every day: if he does not turn he will whet his sword: he has bent his bow, and made it ready." God is more angry with some of you than he is with some in hell. Are you startled by the assertion? "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you." The sins you have already committed are greater than those of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the anger is in proportion to the guilt. An angry God holds you over the gulf of hell, justice demands that you fall into it, and it is nothing but his merciful will that keeps you out of it. He only has to will it, and, before the next tick of the clock you who are condemned already would be for ever where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

**Adrian Rogers** surely got his church's attention with this statement - I'm telling you, if you went to hell, it would be better for you to go to hell from Sodom than from Memphis, Tennessee, because the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached in this place, and in this city, not only by this particular preacher, but by other preachers. (See [Page 882](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION "DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!"** - On the morning of December seventh, 1941, 353 Japanese airplanes droned through the skies, heading toward Pearl Harbor. Within a couple of hours, America would lose eight battleships, six major airfields, almost all of its planes and two thousand four hundred of its servicemen. The attack happened at 7:50 in the morning. Fifteen minutes before the attack, while the planes were still 137 miles away, two soldiers were on a small radar station in the Hawaiians, scanning a screen. As they scanned the radar screen, they saw dots beginning to emerge on the screen and more dots, until it seemed like their whole radar screen was filled with dots. These two young radar men summoned their commanding officer, a youthful supervisor, a lieutenant. No other officer was around, since it was Sunday morning. The lieutenant looked at the radar scan for a while, and then came to the conclusion that these planes were probably from California. And he dismissed the planes, without another thought, saying these crucial words: "Don't worry about it." That's what Jesus is saying that Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum have done in respect to Him, "Don't worry about it." The ruins of the area today are an eloquent testimony to the truthfulness of what Jesus says. To reject His word is to bring ruin. And, might I add, that their ruin is not only eschatological. We think of it as being end-time—you're going to be ruined in the end. To reject Jesus' Word is existential. It is now. It is to deprive your life of the tremendous vitality that Jesus brings in life, the vigor, the glory, the reason for being, the purity, the wholeness, the healing. To lose that is to lose everything. (George Wood)

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**Steven Cole** - We often hear people say that if they saw a miracle or actually heard Jesus in person, they would believe. Not so! These towns heard Jesus and saw His miracles, but they hardened themselves against Him. They would not submit to Him as King. To hear Jesus' messengers is to hear Him, and to reject them is to reject Him (Mt 10:16). Jesus predicts Capernaum's demise. They thought highly of themselves (exalted to heaven), but Jesus thought otherwise, and His word stands. The city of Capernaum is now an uninhabited heap of ruins. The same that happened there could easily happen to America. Our nation has had great light, but even many of those who profess Christ show by their disobedient and self-centered lives that they are not subject to His lordship. It is a terrible thing for those with such knowledge to reject the gospel! So our text shouts at us the words: Prayer (do you pray for the harvest?); Mission (do you labor in the harvest field?); Message (do you proclaim by life and lips the kingdom of God?). ([The Crucial Message](#))

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### Jesus Uses of "I Say to You"

Matt. 3:9; Matt. 5:18; Matt. 5:20; Matt. 5:22; Matt. 5:26; Matt. 5:28; Matt. 5:32; Matt. 5:34; Matt. 5:39; Matt. 5:44; Matt. 6:2; Matt. 6:5; Matt. 6:16; Matt. 6:25; Matt. 6:29; Matt. 8:10; Matt. 8:11; Matt. 10:15; Matt. 10:23; Matt. 10:42; Matt. 11:11; Matt. 11:22; Matt. 11:24; Matt. 12:6; Matt. 12:31; Matt. 13:17; Matt. 16:28; Matt. 17:12; Matt. 17:20; Matt. 18:3; Matt. 18:10; Matt. 18:13; Matt. 18:18; Matt. 18:19; Matt. 19:9; Matt. 19:23; Matt. 19:24; Matt. 19:28; Matt. 21:21; Matt. 21:31; Matt. 21:43; Matt. 23:36; Matt. 23:39; Matt. 24:2; Matt. 24:34; Matt. 24:47; Matt. 25:12; Matt. 25:40; Matt. 25:45; Matt. 26:13; Matt. 26:21; Matt. 26:29; Matt. 26:34; Mk. 2:11; Mk. 3:28; Mk. 5:41; Mk. 8:12; Mk. 9:1; Mk. 9:13; Mk. 9:41; Mk. 10:15; Mk. 10:29; Mk. 11:23; Mk. 11:24; Mk. 12:43; Mk. 13:30; Mk. 13:37; Mk. 14:9; Mk. 14:18; Mk. 14:25; Mk. 14:30; Lk. 3:8; Lk. 4:24; Lk. 4:25; Lk. 5:24; Lk. 6:27; Lk. 7:9; Lk. 7:14; Lk. 7:26; Lk. 7:28; Lk. 7:47; Lk. 9:27; Lk. 10:12; Lk. 10:24; Lk. 11:9; Lk. 12:4; Lk. 12:8; Lk. 12:22; Lk. 12:37; Lk. 12:44; Lk. 12:59; Lk. 13:35; Lk. 16:9; Lk. 18:17; Lk. 18:29; Lk. 21:3; Lk. 21:32; Lk. 22:16; Lk. 22:18; Lk. 22:34; Lk. 23:43; Jn. 1:51; Jn. 3:3; Jn. 3:5; Jn. 3:11; Jn. 4:35; Jn. 5:19; Jn. 5:24; Jn. 5:25; Jn. 6:26; Jn. 6:32; Jn. 6:47; Jn. 6:53; Jn. 8:34; Jn. 8:51; Jn. 8:58; Jn. 10:1; Jn. 10:7; Jn. 12:24; Jn. 13:16; Jn. 13:20; Jn. 13:21; Jn. 13:38; Jn. 14:10; Jn. 14:12; Jn. 16:20; Jn. 16:23; Jn. 21:18

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**Matthew 11:25** At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants."

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BGT Matthew 11:25 ν κεν τ καιρ ποκριθε ς ησο ς επεν· ξομολογο μα σοι, πτερ, κ ριε το ο ρανο κα τ ς υ ς, τι κρυψασ τα τα π σοφ ν κα συνεν ν κα πεκ λυψασ ατ νηπ οις·

KJV Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

NET Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and revealed them to little children.

CSB Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to infants.

ESV Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;

NIV Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.

NLT Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus prayed this prayer: "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike.

NRS Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants;

NJB Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus exclaimed, 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little children.

NAB Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus said in reply, "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike.

YLT Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus answering said, 'I do confess to Thee, Father, Lord of the heavens and of the earth, that thou didst hide these things from wise and understanding ones, and didst reveal them to babes.

GWN Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from wise and intelligent people and revealing them to little children.

- **Jesus** - Lu 10:21-24
- **I praise You** - 1Ch 29:13 Da 2:23 Joh 11:41 2Th 2:13,14
- **Lord** - Ge 14:19,22 De 10:14,15 2Ki 19:15 Isa 66:1 Da 4:35 Ac 17:24
- **that You have hidden these** - Mt 13:11-16 Isa 5:21 29:10-14,18,19 Mk 4:10-12 Joh 7:48,49 Joh 9:39-41 12:38-40 Ro 11:8-10 1Co 1:18-29 2:6-8 3:18-20 2Co 3:14 4:3-6
- **and have revealed them to infants** - Mt 16:17 18:3,4 21:16 1Sa 2:18 3:4-21 Ps 8:2 Jer 1:5-8 Mk 10:14-16 1Co 1:27
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

1 Corinthians 1:18-29+ For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE." 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, 29 that no man should boast before God.

## JESUS PRAISES THE AUTHOR OF ELECTION

At that time Jesus said, "I praise ([exomologeō](#)) You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth - At that time would indicate that this prayer of **praise** seems to occur in the context of His preceding pronouncement of denunciation of those Jews and cities who rejected Him, His miracles and the gospel truth He proclaimed. The implication of the title **Lord of heaven and earth** is that God is sovereign and in full control over all the events, including those in the realm of salvation as Jesus had just described in the preceding section.

*Jesus can thank God both for hiding the knowledge of salvation from some and for revealing it to others*

-- Wayne Grudem

That ([hoti](#) - because) **You have hidden ([kruptō](#)) these things from the wise ([sophos](#)) and intelligent ([sunetos](#)) and have revealed ([apokaluptō](#)) them to infants ([nepios](#))** - Keep the preceding context in mind for in those verses Jesus clearly was teaching on Human Responsibility (esp Mt 11:20 "they did not repent"). Now Jesus praises His Father for the doctrine of election, a tough nut for many saints to swallow. Where do we see election in this verse? On one hand God has hidden and on the other hand He has revealed, showing God's sovereignty over salvation. Why would God hide truth from the **wise and intelligent**? Because they are like the old idiom "know it all's" who are self-sufficient. At the other extreme Jesus says that those who are **infants** have spiritual truth revealed to them. What advantage does one who is an infant possess? He or she (like an infant) is one who is totally dependent upon God for revelation of spiritual truth.

The idea of **hidden** and **revealed** is a clear statement of the sovereignty of God in salvation. France explains "This is Jesus' response (*declared* is literally 'answered') to his rejection especially by the religious leadership, *the wise and understanding*, those who, if they had lived up to their reputation and responsibility, should have been the first to recognize *these things*, i.e. the significance of Jesus' mission. Instead, it was the *babes*, the humble, unlearned, simple people, who understood (cf. [21:15-16](#)). Jesus uses children, as elsewhere, as the paradigm of those whom the world regards as insignificant; but in this context they also represent those who are free from false preconceptions and so are open to the new light now being revealed to them. It was such people, rather than the theologians, who became Jesus' disciples. But this was not the product of some natural law; it was the *gracious will* of the *Father*, who has *hidden* and *revealed*, and it is this revealing will of God (not just the incomprehension of the wise) which calls forth Jesus' formal thanksgiving, expressing his dependence on and delight in his Father's will (Borrow [The Gospel according to Matthew : an introduction and commentary page 198](#))

[Michael Andrus](#) on **these things** - The key to understanding the connection between this paragraph and what comes before is the phrase "these things" in verse 25. What things is Jesus saying have been hidden? I believe He's talking about the truth that all of His miracles pointed to—that He is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Savior of the World. God in His wisdom has hidden these things from the wise and learned, from the religious bigwigs, from the intellectual elites who constituted so much of first-century Pharisaism (and I might add, of twenty-first century Pharisaism as well). And Jesus praises God for this. What is His point? I don't think He is telling us that God makes it impossible for the intelligentsia to understand, but He does make it impossible for them to understand through their normal ways of acquiring knowledge. Scientific investigation will never reveal ultimate truth. The pursuit of power and wealth will never result in finding God. Otherwise the brilliant and well-educated would have a leg up on everyone else, as would the powerful and the wealthy. Instead God has made it so that everyone has to approach Him the same way—by faith, as a little child does. This, of course, does not mean that all the wise are lost or that all children are saved; it means that the knowledge of God does not depend on human wisdom and education. Don't ever forget that 1 Cor. 1:26 does not say, "Not any of you were wise by human standards; not any were influential; not any were of noble birth." Rather it says, "not many." Friends, the deep things of God are not discovered with the mind alone, no matter how sharp it is, or the feelings alone, no matter how sensitive they are. They are only illuminated to the mind of people in a spiritual way, and only by the Holy Spirit (according to 1 Cor. 2:10-14), as He is pleased to reveal them. It was God's good pleasure that the young, the lowly, the weak, the despised could find the truth, and that if the clever found it, it would be in the same way as the rest. ([When God Sits on His Hands](#))

[Andrus](#) adds that "Jesus' prayer is short and he now addresses the disciples on a difficult topic. If God hid truth from some and revealed it to others, that must mean that He is sovereign in the salvation process. People aren't saved by chance, or by osmosis, or by research, or by intuition. They are saved as God sovereignly chooses them, calls them, reveals Himself to them, and redeems them."

**Brian Bell** - After criticizing the unbelieving Jews Jesus thanks the Father for His believing disciples.

*One doctrine answers to another:  
sovereign grace is the answer to abounding guilt.*

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - He turned to the other-side of truth. "Jesus answered ": one doctrine answers to another: sovereign grace is the answer to abounding guilt. With rejoicing spirit Jesus sees how sovereign grace meets the unreasonable abounding of human sin, and chooses out its own, according to the good pleasure of the Father's will. Here is the spirit in which to regard the electing grace of God: "I thank thee. " It is cause for deepest gratitude.

Here is the author of election: "O Father. " It is the Father who makes the choice, and reveals the blessings. Here is his right to act as he does: he is "Lord of heaven and earth. " Who shall question the good pleasure of his will? Here we see the objects of election, under both aspects; the chosen and the passed-over. Babies see because sacred truths are revealed to them, and not otherwise. They are weak and inexperienced. They are simple and unsophisticated. They can cling and trust, and cry, and love; and to such the Lord opens up the treasures of wisdom. The objects of divine choice are such as these. Lord, let me be one among them! The truths of the heavenly kingdom are hid, by a judicial act of God, from men who, in their own esteem, are "the wise and prudent. " They cannot see, because they trust their own dim light, and will not accept the light of God.

Here we see, also, the reason of election, the divine will: "So it seemed good in thy sight. " We can go no further than this. The choice seemed good to Him who never errs, and therefore it is good. This stands to the children of God as the reason which is above all reason. Deus vult is enough for us. If God wills it, so must it be, and so ought it to be.

**Spurgeon** - The wonderful portion of Scripture which makes up the rest of this chapter deals with three things, about which there has been great disputing: namely, the responsibility of man, the sovereign election of God, and the free invitations of the gospel. They are all here in happy combination.

**David Lowery** - Jesus ties people's response to him and his message ("these things") to the work of God who has authority over all creation. Jesus will later link Peter's confession to God's revelation (Mt 16:17). This affirmation of God's sovereignty is placed between passages that affirm human responsibility in either rejecting (vv. 20-24) or accepting (vv. 28-30) Jesus and his message. Jesus affirms both the human responsibility to believe and to live in light of the truth as well as the necessary provision of God to do so (cf. Rom. 9-10; Phil. 2:12-13), he does not explain the relationship between the human and divine elements (however, explanations that diminish either divine responsibility or human responsibility are certainly incorrect)...Society's evaluation of wisdom is radically different than God's. The Psalms similarly extol God's grace to the weak and simple (cf. Psalm. 19:7; 119:130) as does Paul (1 Cor. 1:20-21). ([Bible Knowledge Key Word Study](#))

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**Praise** (1843) ([exomologeō](#) from **ek** - wholly out from or **ex** = out or intensify meaning [implies full, frank, open confession, openly or publicly] of [homologeō](#) - to say the same thing about from **homos** = same + **legō** = speak) means to speak the same thing that another speaks, to fully agree with someone else or to confess by way of giving praise. In this context it means to give praise or thanks - "to make grateful acknowledgements, to give thanks, to sing praises."

**EXOMOLOGEO** - Matt. 3:6; Matt. 11:25; Mk. 1:5; Lk. 10:21; Lk. 22:6; Acts 19:18; Rom. 14:11; Rom. 15:9; Phil. 2:11; Jas. 5:16

**Hidden** (2928) ([kruptō](#) English = crypt, cryptic) is a verb meaning to lay one on the other, to cover, or "to conceal, to hide, to keep secret (either protectively or for selfish reasons). To keep something from being seen. In some contexts **kruptō** means to hide so as to keep secret (eg, Lk 19:42). The first use in the Bible ([Septuagint](#)) is sad describing when Adam and Eve who had just committed the first sin "heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife **hid** themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden." ([Ge 3:8,10](#)) **Kruptō** speaks of literal hiding in many Gospel passages, but also of figurative hiding, as in [Lk 18:34](#) (cp [Lk 19:42](#)) where the meaning of Jesus' words was "hidden from" the disciples (Cp Webster's definition of "cryptic" = having or seeming to have a hidden or ambiguous meaning). In [Jn 19:38](#), **kruptō** is used adverbially to refer to the "secret" (under cover, in hiding) discipleship of Joseph of Arimathea.

**Revealed** (601) ([apokaluptō](#) from **apó** = from + **kalúptō** = cover, conceal, English = apocalypse - see [apokalupsis](#) English = apocalypse) literally means to remove the cover from and so the idea is to remove that which conceals something. Almost all of the NT uses have a figurative use, especially to some aspect of spiritual truth that was heretofore hidden but now has the "lid removed" so that it can be seen (understood). Thus **apokaluptō** means to "take the lid off", to remove the cover and thereby to expose to open view that which had heretofore not been visible, known or disclosed. The idea is to make manifest something previously secret or unknown. It means to make manifest or reveal a thing previously secret or unknown. It describes removing of a veil (an unveiling) or covering thus exposing to open view what was concealed.

**APOKALUPTO** - Matt. 10:26; Matt. 11:25; Matt. 11:27; Matt. 16:17; Lk. 2:35; Lk. 10:21; Lk. 10:22; Lk. 12:2; Lk. 17:30; Jn. 12:38; Rom. 1:17; Rom. 1:18; Rom. 8:18; 1 Co. 2:10; 1 Co. 3:13; 1 Co. 14:30; Gal. 1:16; Gal. 3:23; Eph. 3:5; Phil. 3:15; 2 Thess. 2:3; 2 Thess. 2:6; 2 Thess. 2:8; 1 Pet. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:1

**Infants** (3516) ([nepios](#) from **nê** = negative + **epos** = not able to talk) means literally not speaking and thus a small child above age

of a helpless infant but probably not more than three or four years of age. Figuratively as here in Romans nepios refers to a person who lacks experience, is untried or ignorant or simple-minded. In context Paul is referring to the Gentiles.

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**Spurgeon** - God never did a sovereign act yet that the loving Christ himself could not rejoice in. Be content, therefore, to leave everything that you do not understand in the hand of God.

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**Jerry Bridges** applies the thought of infants to our lives as believers - However knowledgeable about Scripture we may be, we need to approach it each day as little children, asking the Holy Spirit to teach us. Regardless of how much we already understand, there's still an infinite storehouse of understanding of the mind of God waiting for us in Scripture. My own experience is that the more I learn and understand of Scripture, the more I see how little I understand of all that God has revealed to us in His Word. So as you read or study the Bible, don't do so just to buttress your own opinions or favorite doctrines. Rather, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you. (See [The Discipline of Grace - Page 169](#))

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#### **Illustration - The Locked Treasure Chest**

Imagine a treasure chest filled with priceless riches, representing God's truth and wisdom. Around the chest stands a group of scholars, professors, and experts. Each brings their tools—keys, lock-picking devices, and formulas—trying to unlock the chest with their own knowledge and ingenuity. Despite their efforts, the chest remains securely closed.

Nearby, a small child approaches the chest. The child sees a note on the top that says, "*Ask, and it will be opened.*" The child kneels, humbly asks, and the chest immediately unlocks, revealing the treasure.

The Scholars: Represent the "wise and understanding" who rely on their own intellect and self-sufficiency. They miss the simplicity of God's invitation because of their pride and self-reliance.

The Child: Symbolizes those who are humble, dependent, and trusting, much like "little children" in faith. They are willing to ask, believe, and receive.

The Treasure: Represents the truth of how to enter into God's kingdom, truth that is freely given (that's the idea of GRACE) to those who approach with humility.

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#### **Illustration - The Puzzle Pieces**

A group of adults and children are given a puzzle. The adults insist on solving it without instructions, boasting of their intelligence and experience. They try complex strategies and argue over the best approach but grow frustrated as they fail to complete it.

Meanwhile, the children eagerly look at the instruction booklet. By following the simple steps provided, they quickly assemble the puzzle, marveling at the completed picture.

Lesson: The adults represent those who rely on their own wisdom, refusing God's guidance, while the children show the humility and willingness to depend on God's revealed truth.

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#### **Illustration - The Lighthouse and the Fog**

Imagine a dense fog enveloping a coastline, obscuring everything from view. A ship's captain, confident in their years of experience, refuses to listen to the lighthouse operator guiding them to safety. Instead, the captain relies on their own maps and calculations, which lead them dangerously close to the rocks and disaster.

A young sailor, however, humbly listens to the lighthouse operator and steers their small boat safely to shore.

Lesson: The captain represents those "wise and understanding" who depend on their own efforts, while the young sailor exemplifies childlike humility, trusting in the one who can see the bigger picture.

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#### **Illustration - The Locked Door**

A massive locked door stands before a group of people. The wise scholars debate over how to open it, hypothesizing about hidden mechanisms and ancient codes (e.g., "The Da Vinci Code!"). Meanwhile, a child notices a key hanging on the wall with a sign saying, "Take and enter." Without hesitation, the child grabs the key, unlocks the door, and walks through.

Lesson: The key represents God's revelation, freely available to those who are humble and willing to accept it. The scholars'

overthinking blinds them to the simple solution.

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### **Illustration - The Fountain of Life**

A wise man and a child are both thirsty and searching for water. The wise man insists on digging wells and testing the soil for water quality, but he finds nothing. The child, meanwhile, listens to a guide who points to a fountain bubbling with fresh water. The child drinks deeply and is refreshed, while the wise man, too proud to ask for help, remains parched.

Lesson: The child represents those who depend on God to provide living water (spiritual truth), while the wise man illustrates pride and self-reliance, which block access to the gift.

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### **Illustration - The Story of Naaman (2 Kings 5:1-27)**

Naaman, a powerful Syrian commander, seeks healing from leprosy and is instructed by the prophet Elisha to wash in the Jordan River. At first, Naaman is offended by the simplicity of the command and refuses. Only when his servants humbly suggest obedience does he finally follow the prophet's instructions and find healing.

Lesson: Naaman initially represents the "wise and understanding" who resist God's simple ways. His eventual humility leads to revelation and healing, showing the power of childlike faith.

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### **Illustration - The Seed and the Soil**

A farmer plants seeds in different types of soil. Hard, rocky soil resists the seed, preventing it from growing. Soft, fertile soil, however, allows the seed to take root and flourish.

Lesson: The seed represents God's truth. The rocky soil symbolizes pride and self-reliance, which resist the Word, while the fertile soil reflects humility and openness, allowing spiritual growth.

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### **Illustration - The Library Card**

A prestigious professor and a young student both visit a library. The professor, too proud to ask for help, searches aimlessly for hours, unable to find what they need. The student humbly approaches the librarian, who provides exactly the right book.

Lesson: The professor represents those who rely on their own understanding, while the student illustrates humility and trust in seeking guidance, which leads to discovery.

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**Daily Light on the Daily Path** - Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.—“To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.”—“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.”—Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.—How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand.— Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” . . . For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Ps. 119:18; Luke 24:45; Matt. 13:11; Matt. 11:25–26; 1 Cor. 2:12; Ps. 139:17–18; Rom. 11:33–34, 36

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**Os Hillman - APPEARING TO THE LITTLE CHILD** MATTHEW 11:25-26 [TGIF: Today God Is First: Daily Workplace Inspiration](#)

It was a typical Sunday morning church service. Twelve-year-old Jordan, the pastor's daughter, took her regular first-row seat opposite her mother, Pattie. Jordan was deaf and could not understand the message without a sign language interpreter, but she liked to sit with her friend in the front row regardless. On this day, there was no interpreter for the service. However, sitting next to her were her friend and her friend's mother, who both knew sign language.

They often had visiting preachers at their church. This day, the visiting preacher preached a message on “getting into the river of God.” During the service, Jordan asked her friend if she saw what she was seeing.

“See what?” Jordan's friend signed.

"The angels and Jesus!" Jordan replied.

"Where?" her friend signed.

"There! By the guitar!" replied Jordan, pointing to the platform.

It was then that her mother saw the girls talking. Pattie knew that her daughter was seeing something because of the look on her face and her reactions. Jordan never took her eyes off the platform. She began describing what she was seeing to her friend's mother, who then passed the message on to Jordan's mother. Jordan described the scene in every detail. As she looked at the stage, Jesus, who was standing behind the minister, looked back at her and signed, "I love you."

Jesus often appeared to the disciples after His resurrection. Over the centuries, there have been reports of personal appearances of Jesus to both believing and unbelieving individuals. Today, we need to have faith like Jordan. Ask the Lord to make His presence known in your life.

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**Chris Tiegreen** - MATTHEW 11:25, NKJV [The One Year Hearing His Voice Devotional: 365 Days of ... - Page 110](#)

Charles Spurgeon pointed out that in the original language, this verse specifies that Jesus "answered," yet the context doesn't indicate that anyone had spoken to Him. And His answer is addressed to God the Father. Had He just heard from the Father in His Spirit? It would seem so, and it would further imply that Jesus had a continuous conversation with God while the rest of life was going on around Him. If we are to be like Jesus, as Scripture clearly says we should, this has profound implications.

We certainly understand this conversation as it pours forth from our end. When Paul tells his readers to "never stop praying" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), we can instantly relate. Our hearts are frequently conversing with God while we drive, wait in line, have a moment to rest, lie down to go to sleep, and at many other odd moments throughout the day. But hearing from God unceasingly? Well, that's another matter. Few of us are confident that we are picking up on His voice that consistently, and most of us have known someone who is much too convinced that he or she is hearing from God reliably. We don't want to be presumptuous.

Yet our great example, the Lord Himself—the one who calls us to be conformed to His image and of whom we are told, "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17, NKJV)—heard from God reliably, and apparently in the midst of life and circumstances and conversations with other people. This is our goal: to cut through the clutter of our outward environment and our inward thoughts in order to fix our focus on God's voice. Our prayers should lead us to that depth of fellowship.

Father, I want to hear Your voice in the midst of life's circumstances—just like Jesus did. Bring me to that place of listening. Give me the sensitivity to hear and the boldness to believe.

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**A mysterious thing - J C Philpot - Mt 10:25**

True religion is a mysterious thing. Now, this secret, mysterious religion is the sole work of God upon the soul. We have no more, and we have no less than He is pleased to impart. But when we come to look at the nature of this mysterious—yet the only true religion—we find it to consist chiefly of two branches—a knowledge of sin, and a knowledge of salvation—an experience of self, and an experience of Christ—an acquaintance with hell, and an acquaintance with heaven. However varied, deep, or diversified our experience may be, yet, as far as it is of God, we shall find it very much to be summed up in the knowledge of these two distinct things.

Now of these two distinct things, God has said that they are both alike unsearchable. Describing the human heart, God gives this testimony concerning it—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" The Lord here gives a challenge, declaring that the wickedness and deceitfulness of the human heart are so deep, that no man can, that no man does, know it to the bottom.

And again, speaking of the love of Christ, which is the ultimatum—the sum and substance of the other branch of vital godliness—the Lord pronounces that also to be unsearchable. For Paul prayed that the Ephesian church might know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge. He also speaks of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." As we have no line sufficiently deep to sink to the bottom of human depravity, so we have no line sufficiently high to reach to the summit of the love of Christ! Thus, all our knowledge of self, as well as all our knowledge of Christ, must be, from the very nature of things, defective.

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TODAY IN THE WORD

In his book *Orthodoxy*, G. K. Chesterton explains that he loves fairy tales ("entirely reasonable things," he assures us), partly because of one basic law of the universe they teach: Joy is conditional. Cinderella, for example, can have the time of her life if only she will be back by midnight. Pinocchio can be a real boy only if he will not lie, and so on.

Matthew 11 teaches us that God's grace is free, but not without conditions. As the chapter begins, Jesus assured people of the validity of John's message (v. 10), but the problem for His audience was not lack of evidence. Verse 17 indicates that the people maintained an aloof detachment from events they witnessed. John the Baptist and Jesus had brought their messages, but their hearers missed the point (vv. 18-19). All they had witnessed should have led them to repentance.

Many of us grew up with an image of "gentle Jesus, meek and mild," but He minced no words here. Jesus compared the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon favorably with the Jewish cities of Bethsaida and Chorazin (vv. 21-22). Sodom, a city that did not recognize the presence of God's messengers, will be better off than Capernaum (v. 23), a city who had an even greater witness. Only after these judgments and warnings does Christ then begin to speak of blessings. And, curiously enough, these blessings go to the "little children" (v. 25) who can receive the revelation of God the Son.

Fairy tales do possess a bit of magic, for when children read them, they never question the world portrayed. They never think to ask, "Why must Cinderella be back at midnight? Why not 12:30?" This passage shows that Jesus wants this same attitude from us. Great rewards await us. But if we mimic Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, if we stay aloof "adults" in the face of the gospel, we will lose everything. "Then He began to denounce the towns . . . because they did not repent" (v. 20).

#### APPLY THE WORD

Repentance is the key, or condition, of God's blessings. Many may fear what God has for them, and perhaps this is why they, like the audience in chapter 11, assume an aloof posture. But the wise know that nothing matters without repentance. We cannot work our way into God's blessings; like children who bring their boo-boos in order to receive the biggest band-aid in the house, we bring our repentance before God knowing that He will heal us.

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It is well to have our hearts like the poor shepherd to whom a gentleman said, "I wish you a good day."

He replied, "I never knew a bad day."

"How is that, my friend?"

"The days are as God chooses to make them. Therefore they are all good."

Sweet simplicity that leaves everything with God is an attitude that makes Jesus not only your Savior, but also your Lord and Master.

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**Adrian Rogers** - God has hidden these things from the wise and the prudent. If you want to know the truth about Jesus Christ, you're going to have to put away your test tubes and your slide rules. You're going to have to put away your adding machine. You're going to have to lay your intellectual pride in the dust, for God has hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and He has revealed them to babes. You're going to have to come humbly, if you come. You see, a little child is teachable, but I know some adults who are so fixed in their minds they wouldn't even listen to both sides of a phonograph record. A child is teachable; he's humble.

Do you know how you'll know God? You'll know God by revelation, as God reveals Himself to you. But wonder of wonders, and glory of glories, he was willing to reveal himself to those who sold him for a death; and He is willing to reveal Himself to that heart that wants to know Him today.....lay your intellectual pride in the dust and say, "Lord Jesus, I want to know," and He'll show Himself to you —He'll show Himself to you. He will reveal Himself to your heart, "for God hath hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and He hath revealed them unto babes."

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**John MacArthur** - **JESUS OPENS HIS GREAT INVITATION**—MATT. 11:25A [Daily Readings From the Life of Christ Volumes 1-3 - Page 14](#)

When all life's rhetoric, rationalizations, and routines are swept aside, a person is either for Jesus Christ or against Him (cf. Mark 9:40). After performing many miracles (Matt. 4:23–24) and preaching in detail the gospel and sanctification (chaps. 5–7), Jesus more specifically urged people either to accept Him or reject Him. Here begins a final appeal of grace and mercy during His first Galilean ministry.

This opening address to God calls our attention both to Christ's unique relationship to His Father and to the Father's sovereignty over all things, including salvation. Through the Holy Spirit, salvation is a divine provision and not a result of human wisdom, purposes, or ability, and Jesus is thankful for that.

Everyone who evangelizes is sometimes disappointed that so few people respond. We wonder how we can make the message clearer or more convincing, and what things we ought to change. But we also should remind ourselves that some will reject the gospel no matter how effectively we seem to present it. If people rebuffed the Lord when He was in their midst, we have to expect some will also refuse our imperfect witness to them.

We are sad and prayerful for those who don't want the gospel, but like Jesus we must praise our heavenly Father that He has

sovereign control over the universe and that His plan for us and others—saved and unsaved—will not be thwarted. Men and women who reject Christ show their sinful disobedience, not any failure by God.

#### ASK YOURSELF

Seeing worship as such a natural reaction of Jesus—not in purely religious settings, but right in the middle of any moment—should spur us on to make godly praise a frequent occupant in our heart and on our lips. How often does worship just well up inside you?

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**John MacArthur - THOSE WHO MISS THE INVITATION**—MATT. 11:25B–26 [Daily Readings From the Life of Christ, Volume 1 - Page 328](#)

God does not exclude intelligent people from His kingdom but those who rely on their own intelligence for salvation. The apostle Paul was a scholar, but he didn't abandon that brilliance to become a Christian. However, he did stop relying on that training to understand the things of God. Intellect is a gift from God, but it becomes an impediment to authentic knowledge of Him when trust in it supersedes trust in the One who gave it.

The means God uses to hide things from certain people who relish their own intelligence is the darkness of their proud hearts. God's truth is not knowable by mere empirical means. Instead, it must be known and received through the faithful heart, as God graciously reveals it. No amount of human insight can grasp God's saving truths since the unregenerate "cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1 Cor. 2:14).

Of those who miss the divine invitation, the apostle John writes that, "though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' ... 'He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted' " (John 12:37–38, 40). Those who reject the gospel will one day have their unwise choice confirmed by God, the all-wise Judge.

#### ASK YOURSELF

Yes, God's heart moves at the sight of simple trust, honest dependence, and awareness of need. Does your heart likewise bend toward those who are the least deserving yet the most impoverished?

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**John MacArthur - THOSE WHO ACCEPT THE INVITATION.**—MATT. 11:25B–26 [Daily Readings From the Life of Christ Volumes 1-3 - Page 16](#)

An infant is completely dependent on others for everything he or she needs. A baby has no resources of its own to draw upon for help. The same Greek word (for "infants") is used of those who can't eat solid food (1 Cor. 3:1; Heb. 5:13). It is also used of those who can't speak (1 Cor. 13:11) and of those who are helpless (Eph. 4:14).

To such spiritual babes, those who realize they are utterly unable to save themselves, God wants to reveal the truths of His kingdom. As seen in the Sermon on the Mount, the "poor in spirit" who humbly confess their dependency on the Father and the Son receive a clear and irrevocable invitation to salvation.

Infants mentioned here are precisely the opposite kind of persons from the proud Jewish leaders who opposed Jesus at every turn. They are also the antitheses of supposed ideal practitioners of religion who glory in their own self-worth and success.

God is totally satisfied to offer a gospel of grace because that glorifies Him. "For thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, 'I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite' " (Isa. 57:15).

#### ASK YOURSELF

Would you say you've maintained this same spirit of contrition and trust since you've entered into saving relationship with Jesus Christ? What tempts us to claim more confidence in our own identity and our perceived deservedness?

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**Matthew Henry - Convinced Sinners** Matthew 11:25

It becomes children to be grateful. When we come to God as a Father, we must remember that he is Lord of heaven and earth, which obliges us to come to him with reverence as to the sovereign Lord of all; yet with confidence, as one able to defend us from evil, and to supply us with all good. Our blessed Lord added a remarkable declaration, that the Father had delivered into his hands all power, authority, and judgment. We are indebted to Christ for all the revelation we have of God the Father's will and love, ever since Adam sinned. Our Savior has invited all that labor and are heavy-laden, to come unto him. In some senses all men are so. Worldly men burden themselves with fruitless cares for wealth and honors; the gay and the sensual labor in pursuit of pleasures; the

slave of Satan and his own lusts, is the merest drudge on earth. Those who labor to establish their own righteousness also labor in vain. The convinced sinner is heavy-laden with guilt and terror; and the tempted and afflicted believer has labors and burdens. Christ invites all to come to him for rest to their souls. He alone gives this invitation; men come to him, when, feeling their guilt and misery, and believing his love and power to help, they seek him in fervent prayer. Thus it is the duty and interest of weary and heavy-laden sinners, to come to Jesus Christ.

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**Hidden from the Wise** [Experiencing God Day by Day: 365 Daily Devotional - Page 309](#)

One hindrance to hearing a word from God may be our own wisdom. Wisdom, like success, can delude us to think we should take the role of teacher rather than student. Our knowledge lulls us into thinking we have sufficient wisdom to meet any challenge. Believing we are wise tempts us to evaluate the shortcomings of others yet be unaware of how much growth is still required in ourselves.

The Pharisees were the religious experts of their day. They possessed much information about God, but they had no personal relationship with Him. Their knowledge clouded their view of their condition before God. Jesus thanked His Father that it was not to these “experts” that the Father had revealed spiritual truth, but rather to those who were humble and who recognized their need for God's revelation.

When religious leaders experience spiritual failure, their downfall is often met with surprise. It shouldn't be. Religious people with the most knowledge are sometimes the ones least responsive to God's Word. Knowledge can easily lead to pride, and pride impedes us from seeking God.

How do you know if you are a “Pharisee”? When you do not have a teachable spirit. When you become defensive if a fellow Christian shares a concern about your spiritual condition. When you do not seek to hear from God, believing you already know what He thinks. When you feel that you are capable of helping others in their spiritual lives, but no one can teach you anything. Don't allow the limited knowledge you now have to blind you to the great truths God still wants to reveal to you.

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**Wayne Grudem - THE DOCTRINE OF REPROBATION** - [Scroll to page 595 in Systematic Theology](#) (**NB:** for Dr Grudem's lengthy, excellent explanation of the **Doctrine of Election** scroll down to page 580).

When we understand election as God's sovereign choice of some persons to be saved, then there is necessarily another aspect of that choice, namely, God's sovereign decision to pass over others and not to save them. This decision of God in eternity past is called reprobation. Reprobation is the sovereign decision of God before creation to pass over some persons, in sorrow deciding not to save them, and to punish them for their sins, and thereby to manifest his justice.

In many ways the doctrine of reprobation is the most difficult of all the teachings of Scripture for us to think about and to accept because it deals with such horrible and eternal consequences for human beings made in the image of God. The love that God gives us for our fellow human beings and the love that he commands us to have toward our neighbor cause us to recoil against this doctrine, and it is right that we feel such dread in contemplating it.<sup>26</sup> It is something that we would not want to believe, and would not believe, unless Scripture clearly taught it.

But are there Scripture passages that speak of such a decision by God? Certainly there are some. Jude speaks of some persons “who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 4).

Moreover, Paul, in the passage referred to above, speaks in the same way of Pharaoh and others:

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.... What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? (Rom. 9:17–22)

Regarding the results of the fact that God failed to choose all for salvation, Paul says, “The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened” (Rom. 11:7). And Peter says of those who reject the gospel, “they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do” (1 Peter 2:8).<sup>27</sup>

In spite of the fact that we recoil against this doctrine, we must be careful of our attitude toward God and toward these passages of Scripture. We must never begin to wish that the Bible was written in another way or that it did not contain these verses. Moreover, if we are convinced that these verses teach reprobation, then we are obligated both to believe it and accept it as fair and just of God, even though it still causes us to tremble in horror as we think of it. In this context it may surprise us to see that Jesus can thank God both for hiding the knowledge of salvation from some and for revealing it to others: “Jesus declared, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of

heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will' ” (Matt. 11:25–26).

Moreover, we must recognize that somehow, in God’s wisdom, the fact of reprobation and the eternal condemnation of some will show God’s justice and also result in his glory. Paul says, “What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction” (Rom. 9:22). Paul also notes that the fact of such punishment on the “vessels of wrath” serves to show the greatness of God’s mercy toward us: God does this “in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy” (Rom. 9:23).

*Election to salvation is viewed as a cause for rejoicing and praise to God,  
Who is worthy of praise and receives all the credit for our salvation*

We also must remember that there are important differences between election and reprobation as they are presented in the Bible. Election to salvation is viewed as a cause for rejoicing and praise to God, who is worthy of praise and receives all the credit for our salvation (see Eph. 1:3–6; 1 Peter 1:1–3). God is viewed as actively choosing us for salvation and doing so in love and with delight. **But reprobation is viewed as something that brings God sorrow, not delight**(see Ezek. 33:11), and the blame for the condemnation of sinners is always put on the people or angels who rebel, never on God himself (see John 3:18–19; 5:40). So in the presentation of Scripture the cause of election lies in God, and the blame for reprobation lies in the sinner. Another important difference is that the ground of election is God’s grace, whereas the ground of reprobation is God’s justice. Therefore, “double predestination” is not a helpful or accurate phrase because it neglects these differences between election and reprobation.

The sorrow of God at the death of the wicked (“I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live,” Ezek. 33:11) helps us understand how appropriate it was that Paul himself felt great sorrow when he thought about the unbelieving Jews who had rejected Christ. Paul says,

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites. (Rom. 9:1–4)

We ought also to feel this great sorrow as well when we think about the fate of unbelievers.

*The answer must be that God knows that  
this will ultimately result in greater glory for Himself*

But it might be objected at this point, if God genuinely feels sorrow at the punishment of the wicked, then why does he allow it or even decree that it will come about? The answer must be that God knows that this will ultimately result in greater glory for himself. It will show his power and wrath and justice and mercy in a way that could not otherwise be demonstrated. Certainly in our own human experience it is possible to do something that causes us great sorrow but which we know will result in long-term greater good. And so, after this faint human analogy, we may somewhat understand that God can decree something that causes him sorrow yet ultimately will further his glory.

#### **Matthew 11:26 “Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.**

BGT Matthew 11:26 να πατ ρ, τι ο τω ε δοκ α γ νετο μπροσθ ν σου.

KJV Matthew 11:26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

NET Matthew 11:26 Yes, Father, for this was your gracious will.

CSB Matthew 11:26 Yes, Father, because this was Your good pleasure.

ESV Matthew 11:26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

NIV Matthew 11:26 Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

NLT Matthew 11:26 Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way!

NRS Matthew 11:26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

NJB Matthew 11:26 Yes, Father, for that is what pleased you to do.

NAB Matthew 11:26 Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will.

YLT Matthew 11:26 Yes, Father, because so it was good pleasure before Thee.

GWN Matthew 11:26 Yes, Father, this is what pleased you.

- for - Job 33:13 Isa 46:10 Lu 10:21 Ro 9:18 11:33-36 Eph 1:9,11 3:11 2Ti 1:9
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE FATHER WAS PLEASED WITH HIS PLAN OF SALVATION

**Yes** - Jesus is affirming what He has just said regarding the wise and infants.

**Father, for this way was well-pleasing (eudokía) in Your sight (emprosthen)** - What "way"? **This** refers to the **way** God ordained for sinners to be saved as Jesus had just described in Mt 11:25. In other words, God was well-pleased to hide the great mysteries of His wise dealings from the wise and learned and well-pleased to reveal these spiritual truths to those who come to Him as little children.

**R T France** - Spiritual understanding does not depend on human equipment or status. It is the gift of God, and so is given to those in whom he is well pleased (the verb [[eudokeo](#)] in Mt 3:17+ is from the same root as *gracious will* here). It depends on the sovereign purpose of the *Lord of heaven and earth*, and his choice falls on those the world would never expect. (Borrow [The Gospel according to Matthew : an introduction and commentary page 198](#))

*God is totally satisfied to offer a gospel of grace because that glorifies Him.*

-- John MacArthur

As **Leon Morris** says "We are not to think that some people of little ability chanced to hit on the truth while more able and profound people missed the mark, and that God then accepted what happened. Jesus is saying that the Father planned things this way. He never intended that the knowledge of the kingdom and the like should be such that only the profoundly intellectual could find it. It was his good will that the lowly could find the way, and that if the clever found it, it would be in the same way as the lowly did." (See [The Gospel According To Matthew](#))

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**Well pleasing (2107)(eudokía)** refers to what gives the Father pleasure, in this case the hiding of the truths concerning salvation from those who thought of themselves as wise and clever (perhaps in the world's ways but not in God's ways) and uncovering to individuals who were unskilled and untaught.

**EUDOKIA - 9V** - Matt. 11:26; Lk. 2:14; Lk. 10:21; Rom. 10:1; Eph. 1:5; Eph. 1:9; Phil. 1:15; Phil. 2:13; 2 Thess. 1:11

**In...sight (1715) emprosthen** from **en** = in + **prosthen** = in front of, before <> from **pros** = toward + suffix --then = denotes direction) means in front of or before. Gingrich - 1. adv. in front, forward, ahead Lk 19:4, 28; Rev 4:6. ta. e;) what lies ahead Phil 3:13.—2. functions as prep. w. gen. in front of, before Mt 5:24; 27:29; Lk 5:19; Ac 18:17. Before, in the presence of Mt 10:32f; 27:11; Gal 2:14; 1 Th 1:3; 2:19. Before, in the sight of Mt 6:1 Mk 2:12; Lk 19:27; Jn 12:37; Ac 10:4; in the face of Mt 23:13. Of rank before, higher than Jn 1:15, 30.

**Matthew 11:27 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."**

BGT Matthew 11:27 Π ντα μοι παρεδθη π το πατρ ς μου, κα ο δε ς πιγιν σκει τ ν υ ν ε μ πατρ, ο δ τ ν πατ ς ς πιγιν σκει ε μ υ ς κα ν βο ληται υ ς ποκαλ ψαι.

KJV Matthew 11:27 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.

NET Matthew 11:27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son decides to reveal him.

CSB Matthew 11:27 All things have been entrusted to Me by My Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son desires to reveal Him.

ESV Matthew 11:27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except

the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

NIV Matthew 11:27 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

NLT Matthew 11:27 "My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

NRS Matthew 11:27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

NJB Matthew 11:27 Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

NAB Matthew 11:27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

YLT Matthew 11:27 'All things were delivered to me by my Father, and none doth know the Son, except the Father, nor doth any know the Father, except the Son, and he to whom the Son may wish to reveal Him.

GWN Matthew 11:27 "My Father has turned everything over to me. Only the Father knows the Son. And no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son is willing to reveal him.

- **All things have been handed over to Me**- Mt 28:18 Joh 3:35 5:21-29 13:3 17:2 1Co 15:25-27 Eph 1:20-23 Php 2:10,11 Heb 2:8-10 1Pe 3:22
- **no man** - Lu 10:22 Joh 10:15
- **neither** - Joh 1:18 Jn 6:46 Jn 10:15 Jn 14:6-9 17:2,3,6,25,26 1Jn 2:23 5:19,20 2Jn 1:9

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 28:18+ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.**

Luke 10:22+ "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."

John 3:35+ "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.

John 10:15+ even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

John 17:2+ even as **Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind**, that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life.

John 6:37+ "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not (double negative - ou me = absolutely not) cast out.

## THE SUPREME POWER OF THE SON IN SALVATION

**All things have been handed over** ([paradidomi](#)) **to Me by My Father** - **All things** means everything without exception (cf Mt 28:18+) In context this speaks especially to the outworking of the plan of redemption which the Son would bring to fruition at Calvary. **Handed over** ([paradidomi](#)) conveys the basic meaning of to give over from one's hand to someone else, to transfer to another, and especially to give over to the power of another. In this case the Father gives the power over **all things** to the Son.

**David Lowery** on **All things** (panta) -The context concerns God's revelation (Mt 11:25). Jesus is here identified as the agent of that revelation. Whatever anyone needs to know about relationship with God can be learned from Jesus. Only by means of what Jesus says and does can a person have a relationship with God (cf. John 14:6+) ([Bible Knowledge Key Word Study](#))

**Robertson** commenting on **handed over** notes that "It is the timeless aorist like edothē ("has been given") in Matthew 28:18 and "points back to a moment in eternity, and implies the pre-existence of the Messiah" (Plummer).

**And no one** ([oudeis](#) - absolutely no one) **knows** ([epiginosko](#)) **the Son except the Father** ([pater](#)) -

**Nor does anyone know** ([epiginosko](#)) **the Father except the Son** - Don't misunderstand what Jesus is saying here. **Knows** ([epiginosko](#)) means one knows by experiencing God which is far different than a mere accumulation of facts about God. Today many, probably most, in America know **about** God (our coins have not yet eliminated the phrase "In God we trust!") and

if asked "*Do you know God and are you going to spend eternity with Him?*" a majority of Americans would answer affirmatively (The answer I usually hear is "I think so.") This is the ultimate fatal delusion, for they do not really **know** the **Father** experientially and personally as the One Who sent His Son to save the world. They do not have a personal relationship with Him through faith in His Son. They do not belong to the family of God and while they might call Him "Father," the truth is God is NOT their Father. Their father sadly is the devil (see comments on 1Jn 3:8-10+, 1Jn 4:8+, cf Jn 8:44+). And the reason they don't know Him is because the Son has not willed to "take the lid off" so to speak of the Father's identity. Spiritual truth can only be spiritually discerned and must be spiritually revealed. **My Father** is a clear counter to all who say Jesus never said He was divine! Clearly Jesus is claiming equality with God. How can we be so certain? In John 5:18+ we read "For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, (Why did they seek to KILL HIM?) because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also **was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.**" Jesus the Man claimed to be God because He is God!

**Robertson** - The Messianic consciousness of Christ is here as clear as a bell. It is a moment of high fellowship. Note epiginōskei ([epiginosko](#)) twice for "fully know." Note also boulētai = wills, is willing. The Son retains the power and the will to reveal the Father to men."

**NET NOTE** - This verse has been noted for its conceptual similarity to teaching in John's Gospel (Jn 10:15; Jn 17:2). The authority of the Son and the Father are totally intertwined.

**Anyone to whom the Son wills ([boulomai](#)) to reveal ([apokalupto](#)) Him** - Verses like this make some people chaff, but the verse expresses the truth that the only ones who can truly know God as their Father are those to whom Jesus reveals this otherwise hidden spiritual truth. Jesus made a similar statement in John declaring that "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." (Jn 6:44+) He added "that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." (John 6:65+)

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - Here we have the channel through which electing love works towards men: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father. " All things are put into the Mediator's hands; fit hands both towards God and towards man; for he alone knows both to perfection. Jesus reveals the Father to the babes whom he has chosen. Only the Father can fill the Son with benediction, and only through the Son can that benediction flow to any one of the race of men. Know Christ, and you know the Father, and know that the Father himself loveth you. There is no other way of knowing the Father but through the Son. In this our Lord rejoiced; for his office of Mediator is dear to him, and he loves to be the way of communication between the Father whom he loves, and the people whom he loves for the Father's sake. Observe the intimate fellowship between the Father and the Son, and how they know each other as none else ever can. Oh, to see all things in Jesus by the Father's appointment, and so to find the Father's love and grace in finding Christ. My soul, there are great mysteries here! Enjoy what thou canst not explain.

**William Hendriksen** (Borrow [Exposition of the Gospel of Luke](#)) - The Son has whatever the sinner needs. He has whatever is necessary for carrying out his mediatorial task. He was endowed with the Spirit of Jehovah, that is, with the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and the fear of Jehovah (Isa. 11:1, 2). All these spiritual qualities and many more have been entrusted to the Mediator by the Father, in order that from him as the Fountain they might flow out to others. Can anything be lacking in the Son's saving power? No, indeed, for so inexhaustible are his resources that the Father alone knows the Son. It is the Father alone who is able to penetrate to the depths of the Son's essence, his infinite treasures of wisdom, grace, power, etc. In order to be saved and to live to the glory of God Triune, does the sinner need to know the will of the Father? No one knows who the Father is except the Son ... and now notice the significant and very comforting addition: "and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Truly

Thou, O Christ, art all I want;  
More than all in Thee I find.

—Charles Wesley

([Play this beautiful choral version of Jesus, Lover of my Soul](#))

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**John MacArthur - JESUS IS GOD**—MATT. 11:27 [Daily Readings From the Life of Christ Volumes 1-3 - Page 17](#)

Any genuine invitation to salvation such as Jesus gives here must include mention of God's revelation. Nobody, even the most sincerely religious or philosophically determined, has ever obtained real salvation unless God sovereignly revealed it—and such revelation has to include the truth that Jesus Christ is God.

Jesus without doubt or qualification equates Himself with God and calls Himself the Son of the Father. The Jews of His day would never have used the expression about divine fatherhood unless they were referring to God's fatherhood over their nation. Jesus' statement was and is one of His clearest declarations of deity, and it discloses an intimate, unique, and inseparable relationship with the Father.

Without question, Jesus' audience knew that His statements about a relationship with His heavenly Father meant He was claiming to be the Son of God. The unbelieving Jews did not at all accept this claim. On other similar occasions they would want to kill Him for such "blasphemous" assertions (see John 5:18; 10:30–38).

That Jesus is God is an essential component of the gospel, because apart from deity no savior could redeem a single soul. The heresy of making Christ just another human teacher or martyr devalues the gospel and robs it of its true saving power.

#### ASK YOURSELF

To trust God completely means also knowing that He is fully capable of revealing Himself to anyone He desires, any time He desires. Our task is merely to be faithful to reveal what we have heard and seen in Him, trusting the Lord to save His people. Are you being true to that calling?

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**John MacArthur - REVELATION SOVEREIGNLY GIVEN**—MATT. 11:27 [Daily Readings From the Life of Christ Volumes 1-3 - Page 18](#)

Human ideas and concepts are temporal and completely incapable of producing spiritual truth or guidance. Only because God has sovereignly given all things to Christ and in turn revealed the Son to men and women can any of us be saved. God must break into the vacuum of the sinful human heart and reveal Himself before we can know Him.

Because the Father gave the Son all authority in the universe, Jesus had full right to send out His disciples to "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matt. 28:19–20a). When our Lord pronounced this Great Commission, His earthly ministry had already illustrated His sovereign authority and control over sin, disease, and death, as well as His supreme prerogative to forgive sins and redeem all who believe from the wrath to come. This was a divine preview of the complete authority Christ will have during His millennial reign over the earth.

Of God's sovereignty in revelation and salvation, we can apply the insight of the Reformer Martin Luther: "Here the bottom falls out of all merit, all powers and abilities of reason or the free will men dream of, and it all counts nothing before God. Christ must do and must give everything."

ASK YOURSELF What did Christ reveal to you about Himself that led you to place your faith in Him? What has He revealed of Himself to you in recent days—fresh glimpses into His character, His nature, and His dealings with man?

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

**Greek:** **Deute** (imperative) pros me pantes hoi kopiontes (2PPAP) kai pephortismenoi, (2PRPP) kago anapauso (1SFAI) humas.

**Amplified:** Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest. [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.] ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** Come to me, all you who are exhausted and weighted down beneath your burdens, and I will give you rest. ([Westminster Press](#))

**ESV:** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

**NLT:** Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Come to me, all of you who are weary and over-burdened, and I will give you rest! ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Come here to me, all who are growing weary to the point of exhaustion, and who have been loaded with burdens and are bending beneath their weight, and I alone will cause you to cease from your labor and take away your burdens and thus refresh you with rest.

**Young's Literal:** 'Come unto me, all ye labouring and burdened ones, and I will give you rest,

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**COME TO ME ALL WHO ARE WEARY AND HEAVY-LADEN AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST: Deute** (imperative) pros me pantes hoi kopiontes (2PPAP) kai pephortismenoi, (2PRPP) kago anapauso (1SFAI) humas:

- **Come:** Isa 45:22-25 53:2,3 55:1-3 Jn 6:37 7:37 Rev 22:17
- **All:** Mt 23:4 Ge 3:17-19 Job 5:7 14:1 Ps 32:4 38:4 90:7-10 Eccl 1:8,14 2:22,23 4:8 Isa 1:4 61:3 66:2 Mic 6:6-8 Ac 15:10 Ro 7:22-25 Gal 5:1
- **And I will give you rest:** Mt 11:29 Ps 94:13 116:7 Isa 11:10 28:12 48:17,18 Jer 6:16 2Th 1:7 Heb 4:1
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**J H Jowett** wisely wrote that...

This exquisite passage is like a flower which one is almost afraid to touch, lest he should spoil the delicate bloom. Yet to disturb the flower may awake a fragrance and distribute it to others.

**J C Ryle** adds that...

There are few texts more striking than this in all the Bible—few that contain so wide and sweeping an invitation—few that hold out so full and comfortable a promise. ([Come Unto Me](#))

Indeed, as I began to compile the notes on this great passage, it became obvious to me that the simple words of Jesus were so profound that an entire book, even a library of books, could not exhaust their meaning. **C H Spurgeon** delivered at least 12 sermons on Mt 11:28-30 and yet said that one could not preach too often on these passages! **Spurgeon** also wrote that...

there are mines of instruction here. Superficially read, this royal promise has cheered and encouraged tens of thousands, but there is a wealth in it which the diligent digger and miner shall alone discover. Its shallows are cool and refreshing for the lambs, but in its depths are pearls for which we hope to dive.

And so the following comments are meant only to give you food for thought as you ponder these great words of our Savior. Let me strongly encourage you to treasure Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28-30 in your heart (**Memorize His Word**), so that you will be able to meditate on them (**Meditation**) and allow your Teacher the Holy Spirit to minister deeply to your soul. You will not be disappointed.

## THE GRAND INVITATION: COME!

**Come!** The greatest invitation that ever issued from a Man's lips. "**Come!**" **Come** the first time to salvation (**Justification**). In the context of Jesus' preceding words in Matthew 11, this is the primary interpretation of His call to come...

### COME TO JESUS FOR SALVATION

[Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy](#)

written by Joseph Hart

([Sung by Fernando Ortega & Amy Grant](#))

([Sung by Todd Agnew](#))

**Come**, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;  
Jesus ready stands to save you,  
Full of pity, love and power.

*Refrain*

*I will arise and go to Jesus,  
He will embrace me in His arms;  
In the arms of my dear Savior,  
O there are ten thousand charms.*

**Come**, ye thirsty, come, and welcome,  
God's free bounty glorify;  
True belief and true repentance,  
Every grace that brings you nigh

*Refrain*

Come, ye weary, heavy laden,  
Lost and ruined by the fall;  
If you tarry till you're better,  
You will never come at all.

*Refrain*

View Him prostrate in the garden;  
On the ground your Maker lies.  
On the bloody tree behold Him;  
Sinner, will this not suffice?

*Refrain*

Lo! th' incarnate God ascended,  
Pleads the merit of His blood:  
Venture on Him, venture wholly,  
Let no other trust intrude.

*Refrain*

Let not conscience make you linger,  
Not of fitness fondly dream;  
All the fitness He requireth  
Is to feel your need of Him.

*Refrain*

While there must be this initial coming to Jesus for **salvation rest**, by way of application, there is yet a need for every saint to daily "**Come**" and allow the Spirit of Christ to grow us in grace and Christlikeness (2Pe 3:18+) (**Sanctification** see **Three Tenses of Salvation**).

And then there will be a final invitation to "**Come!**" when Jesus invites us to **come away** to Him (if we pass away before He returns) or to **come up** to Him (if we are here to experience the Rapture - 1Th 4:17+) and be with Him forever and ever in the **eternal rest** of Paradise! (**Glorification**). "Therefore **comfort** (present imperative-command to continually encourage) one another with" Jesus' invitation to "**Come!**". (1Th 4:18+)

### [I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say](#)

(Vocal by Michael Card)

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"Come unto me and rest;  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down  
Thy head upon my breast."

I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary and worn and sad;  
I found in Him a RESTING PLACE,  
And He has made me glad.

-Horatius Bonar

[\(Chorale version\)](#)

**THOUGHT** - Dear reader, at whatever stage of your life you find yourself, will you not hear the gracious invitation that falls from His perfect lips?

Will you not come dear struggling sinner, trying to make yourself acceptable to the Holy God?

Will you not come dear struggling saint, trying daily to earn your Father's approval, trying daily to defeat that besetting sin that only the Spirit of Christ can defeat as you learn to cooperate with Him (Ro 8:13+)?

And dear saint, will you not live in the light of His final call to "Come !", allowing this firm anchor motivate a deep desire for daily purification (1Jn 3:3+) and growth in likeness to Christ, your Lord?

And here is the great assurance that the One Who calls us to "Come" now will Himself come very soon, a coming for which we pray "Come Lord Jesus"...

**He who testifies to these things says,  
"Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen.  
Come, Lord Jesus.  
The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.  
Revelation 22:20, 21  
The End!**

**Come** - Not "do this" or "don't do that" but simply "Come". Note also that Jesus does not say come to the church, to a creed, to a clergyman, to a "denomination" or to anything but to Jesus Himself, to a vital, dynamic, radical relationship with the Living Lord. As **Oswald Chambers** says "Personal contact with Jesus alters everything." Do nothing else but **come** to Him, for He alone is **the way, the truth, the life** (Jn 14:6). There is **salvation rest** in no one else, for there is no other Name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved (the first time and then every day thereafter!). (Acts 4:12) Jesus is the narrow gate, the narrow way that leads to **the rest of eternal life** (Mt 7:13, 14). Inherent in Jesus' call to come is that the hearer **come now** and not wait nor procrastinate - when you hear His invitation, that is the day of salvation (cp 2Cor 6:2).

**J C Ryle** exhorts us "Beloved brethren, see that you refuse not Him who speaks to you this day. If a letter came to you from the ruler of this country you would not despise it. If you were sick, and advice came from a wise physician, you would not reject it. If you were in danger, and counsel came from your best and truest friend, you would not make light of it. Then hear the words that Jesus sends to you this day. Listen to the King of kings. Then body and soul shall be His. ([Come Unto Me](#))

**Spurgeon** as usual says it well "'**Come**'; He drives none away; He calls them to Himself. His favorite word is **Come**.' (Ed: "Come" was the call to His first disciples - Mt 4:19YLT) Not, go to Moses - '**Come** unto me.' To Jesus Himself we must come, (How?) **by a personal trust**. Not to doctrine, ordinance, nor ministry are we to come first; but to the personal Saviour.

**How do we come to Jesus?** The most "generic answer" is **by faith and trust in Jesus**.

**Oswald Chambers** adds that "The attitude of coming is that the will resolutely lets go of everything and deliberately commits all to Him."

**Adam Clarke** says "Come to Me" "in the **New Covenant** implies simply, believing in Christ and becoming His disciple or follower." Are you a follower of Christ? Have you come to Jesus?

**William MacDonald** elaborates on what it means to "**Come**" writing that "To come means to **believe** (Acts 16:31); to **receive** (John 1:12); to **eat** (John 6:35); to **drink** (John 7:37); to **look** (Isa. 45:22); to **confess** (1 Jn. 4:2); to **hear** (John 5:24, 25); to **enter a door** (John 10:9); to **open a door** (Rev. 3:20); to **touch the hem of His garment** (Matt. 9:20, 21); and to **accept the gift of eternal life** through Christ our Lord (Ro 6:23). (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

*"**Come**"; he drives none away: he calls them to himself.  
His favorite word is "**Come**." Not, — go to Moses, "**Come** unto me. "*

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - Here is the gracious invitation of the gospel in which the Savior's tears and smiles were blended, as in a covenant rainbow of promise. "**Come**"; he drives none away: he calls them to himself. His favorite word is "**Come**." Not, — go to Moses, "Come unto me." To Jesus himself we must come, by a personal trust. Not to doctrine, ordinance, or ministry are we to come first; but to the personal Savior. All laboring and laden ones may come: he does not limit the call to the spiritually laboring, but every working and wearied one is called. It is well to give the largest sense to all that mercy speaks. Jesus calls me. Jesus promises "rest", as his gift: his immediate, personal, effectual rest he freely gives to all who come to him by faith. To come to him is the first step, and he entreats us to take it. In himself, as the great sacrifice for sin, the conscience, the heart, the understanding obtain complete rest. When we have obtained the rest he gives, we shall be ready to hear of a further rest which we find.

**David Lowery** on **Come...all** - Jesus' invitation is universal, qualified (if at all) only by recognition of personal need (would the "wise" of Mt 11:25 see themselves as "weary and burdened"?). Seeing such a need requires a response for help, the accepting of the divine invitation to find rest. The plight of those in need is reminiscent of the crowds (cf. Mt 9:36) who followed Jesus. But it is only those who respond to Jesus' invitation who experience the rest he offers. ([Bible Knowledge Key Word Study](#))

**James Smith** addresses believers writing that...

All true Christians know Christ—not with a mere theoretical knowledge, which may be obtained from books; but with a knowledge which the Holy Spirit works in the heart. We know Christ . . . in the glory of His person, in the perfection of His work, and in the riches of His wondrous grace. We so know Christ, that He stands out before us, as the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely One. And the more we know Him—the

more intimate we wish to become with Him!

We not only know Christ—but we need Him. And the longer we live—the more we need Him. Nor do we merely need Christ, but we need everything in Christ, or that Christ has. We need . . . His blood to cleanse us, His righteousness to clothe us, and His Spirit to sanctify us. We need Christ daily, hourly!

As we need Christ—so we come to Christ. Not once for all, but we continue to come. We must come to Him . . . in every trial, in every trouble, in every conflict, to unburden our minds, to find rest for our souls. We come to Him . . . for wisdom, for strength, for holiness. Much of experimental (experiential) religion consists in coming daily and hourly to Jesus.

**Come** (1205) (**deute**) is an adverb which means "Come here!" or "Come on!" in the sense of a command or an exhortation. **Deute** is used with the plural imperative either expressed or more often understood (as in Mt 11:28). For example in Mt 4:19 Jesus says "**Follow** Me" or more literally "**Come** you after me" where the adverb **deute** functions as an aorist imperative, a command to do this now! **Deute** is used most often by Jesus - Mt 4:19, 11:28, 19:21, Mt 25:34 (When He reigns as King in the Millennium), Mk 1:17, 6:31, 10:21, 18:22, Jn 11:43 (Call to Lazarus), Jn 21:12 (Post-resurrection invitation to His disciples to eat breakfast). **Friberg** -- **Deute** serving as the plural of deuro; adverb; (1) with an imperative following come! come on! come now! (Mt 21:38); (2) absolutely come (Mt 22.4); with opiso come after, follow (Mt 4.19)

**Deute** - 21x in 21v in the NT - **NAS** = come(9), come away(1), follow\*(2). Matt 4:19; 11:28; 19:21; 21:38; 22:4; 25:34; 28:6; Mark 1:17; 6:31; 10:21; 12:7; Luke 18:22; John 4:29; 11:43; 21:12; Acts 7:3, 34; Rom 1:13; Rev 17:1; 19:17; 21:9.

**Deute** - 30v in the non-apocryphal Septuagint -Gen. 11:3; Gen. 11:4; Gen. 11:7; Gen. 37:20; Gen. 37:27; Exod. 1:10; Jos. 10:4; Jdg. 9:15; 2 Ki. 1:2; 2 Ki. 1:6; 2 Ki. 6:2; 2 Ki. 6:13; 2 Ki. 6:19; 2 Ki. 7:4; 2 Ki. 7:14; 2 Ki. 22:13; Neh. 2:17; Job 17:10; Ps. 34:11; Ps. 46:8; Ps. 66:5; Ps. 66:16; Ps. 74:8; Ps. 83:4; Ps. 95:1; Ps. 95:6; Isa. 1:18; Isa. 2:3; Isa. 2:5; Isa. 9:10; Isa. 27:11; Isa. 56:9; Jer. 11:19; Jer. 18:18; Jer. 51:10; Dan. 3:26; Dan. 6:5; Jon. 1:7; Mic. 4:2;

**Spurgeon** outlines Jesus' special invitation...

1. It is personal — "Come unto me." God directs to Christ, not to His members.
2. It is present — "Come " now, do not wait.
3. So sweet an invitation demands a spontaneous acceptance.
4. He puts the matter very exclusively. Do nothing else but come to Him.

**David Guzik** observes that when Jesus commands men and women to "Come unto Me", He demonstrates "His authority...This invitation is unthinkable in the mouth of anyone else but God, and woe to the men who call people to themselves instead of Jesus!

**Oswald Chambers** comments on Jesus' invitation to "Come" = When you hear those words you will know that something must happen in you before you can come. The Holy Spirit will show you what you have to do, anything at all that will put the axe at the root of the thing which is preventing you from coming to Jesus. You will never get further until you are willing to do that one thing. The Holy Spirit will locate the one impregnable thing in you, but He cannot budge it unless you are willing to let Him.

**All** - This Greek word generally means all with no exceptions, and yet in the present context the all is in a sense restricted...restricted by Jesus statement to those humble souls who acknowledge their weariness of struggling with sin. This "**all**" is God's "**all** merciful antidote" for the horrible "**all**" of Ro 3:23 where Paul says "**all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Jesus is speaking to a Jewish audience but with the "**all**" He flings opens the gates of salvation to sinners from every tribe, every tongue, every people, every nation! As a Gentile believer, I praise God for this "**all**" from the lips of the Redeemer of mankind!

**J C Ryle** expounds on the "**all**"...

The "laboring and heavy laden" describes all who are pressed down and burdened by a feeling of sin. It describes all whose consciences are set at work, and who are brought to concern about their soul—all who are anxious about salvation, and desire to have it—all who tremble at the thought of judgment, and know not how to get through it, and of hell, and are afraid of falling into it; and long for heaven, and dread not getting to it; and are distressed at the thought of their own sinfulness, and want deliverance. All such people appear to be the laboring and heavy laden to whom Jesus speaks....This was the state of mind in which we see the jailer at Philippi. He was roused from sleep by an earthquake. His fear brought his sin to his remembrance, and he came and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" This is the state of mind I desire to see in each of you, for the beginning of all saving religion. You will never come to Christ until

you feel your need. You ought, everyone, to feel laboring and heavy laden....But to all laboring and heavy laden souls, whoever they may be, to you Jesus speaks—to you is this word of salvation sent. Take heed that it is not in vain. Jesus speaks to ALL such: none are left out. ([Come Unto Me](#))

**John Gill** - The persons invited are not 'all' the inhabitants of mankind, but with a restriction: 'all ye that labor and are heavy laden,' meaning not those who labor in the service of sin and Satan, are laden with iniquity and insensible of it: those are not weary of sin nor burdened with it, nor do they want or desire any rest for their souls; **but** such who groan, being burdened with the guilt of sin on their consciences and are pressed down with the unsupportable yoke of the Law and the load of their trespasses, and have been laboring till they are weary, in order to obtain peace of conscience and rest for their soul by the observance of these things, but in vain. These are encouraged to come to Him, lay down their burdens at His feet and look to Him, and lay hold by faith on His person, blood and righteousness.

**Matthew Henry** - The character of the persons invited: all that labor and are heavy laden. This is a word in season to him that is weary (Isa. 50:4). Those that complain of the burden of the ceremonial law, which was an intolerable yoke, and was made much more so by the tradition of the elders (Luke 11:46); let them come to Christ and they shall be made easy....But it is rather to be understood of the burden of sin, both the guilt and the power of it. All those, and those only, are invited to rest in Christ that are sensible of sin as a burden and groan under it, that are not only convicted of the evil of sin—their own sin—but are contrite in soul for it; that are really sick of sin, weary of the service of the world and the flesh, that see their state sad and dangerous by reason of sin, and are in pain and fear about it: as Ephraim (Jer. 31:18-20), the prodigal (Luke 15:17), the publican (Luke 18:13), Peter's hearers (Acts 2:37), Paul (Acts 9), the jailer (Acts 16:29, 30). This is a necessary preparative for pardon and peace"

**John Calvin** - He now kindly invites to Himself those whom He acknowledges to be fit for becoming His disciples. Though He is ready to reveal the Father to all, yet the great part are careless about coming to Him, because they are not affected by a conviction of their necessities. Hypocrites give themselves no concern about Christ because they are intoxicated with their own righteousness, and neither hunger nor thirst after His grace. Those who are devoted to the world set no value on a heavenly life. It would be vain therefore for Christ to invite either of these classes, and therefore He turns to the wretched and afflicted. He speaks of them as 'labouring' or being under a 'burden,' and does not mean generally those who are oppressed with griefs and vexations, but those who are overwhelmed by their sins, who are filled with alarm at the wrath of God and are ready to sink under so weighty a burden.

**Adam Clarke** explains...

The metaphor (**all who are weary and heavy laden**) appears to be taken from a man who has a great load laid upon him, which he must carry to a certain place: every step he takes reduces his strength, and renders his load the more oppressive. However, it must be carried on; and he labors, uses his utmost exertions, to reach the place where it is to be laid down. A kind person passing by, and, seeing his distress, offers to ease him of his load, that he may enjoy rest.

The **Jews**, heavily laden with the burdensome rites of the Mosaic institution, rendered still more oppressive by the additions made by the scribes and Pharisees, who, our Lord says, (Mt 23:4) bound on heavy burdens; and laboring, by their observance of the law, to make themselves pleasing to God, are here invited to lay down their load, and receive the salvation procured for them by Christ. (**Ed: Are you laboring to make yourself "pleasing to God?" This is a subtle trap into which we all so easily fall because we have been so well trained to be "man pleasers" and think that we can please God in the same manner we have learned to "please" men!**)

**Sinners**, wearied in the ways of iniquity (cp Isa 6:5 Lk 5:8), are also invited to come to this Christ, and find speedy relief (Lk 18:13, 14).

**Penitents** (those who feel or show sorrow and regret for against the Holy God), burdened with the guilt of their crimes, may come to this Sacrifice, and find instant pardon (cp 1Jn 1:9, Pr 28:13+).

**Believers**, sorely tempted, and oppressed by the remains of the carnal mind (**the "flesh"**), may come to this blood, that cleanses from all unrighteousness; and, purifies from all sin, and powerfully succors (Literally, succor means to run to or run to support; hence that which provides help or relieve when in difficulty, want, distress or suffering) in every temptation (**every trial**), they shall find uninterrupted **rest** in this complete Saviour.

**All** are invited to come, and **all** are promised **rest**. If few find **rest** from sin and vile affections, it is because few come to Christ to receive it. (**Comment: How often we refuse to "Come" because we enjoy our sin more than we desire the Savior at that moment. God help us to "Come" quickly to Jesus!**)

Note that Jesus directs His call to the heavy burdened, to the weak, not the strong. "He called those who sensed they must come to

Him to relieve their need instead of living in self-sufficiency." ([Guzik](#)) God is ever opposed to the proud, but stands ready to give abundant grace to the humble of heart. (James 4:6+) Therefore "Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you." (James 4:10+)

**Jesus'** invitation in the New Testament to come and be refreshed recalls Jehovah's offer in the Old Testament to His people to rest in the New Covenant...

For I satisfy the weary ones and refresh everyone who languishes. (Jer 31:25).

**Weary and heavy laden** - As Jesus said elsewhere it is not the (spiritually) well who need a physician but the (spiritually) sick. Do you even see your need to come to Jesus? As MacDonald says "In order to truly come to Jesus, a person must admit that he is burdened with the weight of sin. Only those who acknowledge they are lost can be saved." As discussed earlier, while Jesus' invitation is especially a call to come to Him for salvation, the call is also applicable to saints who are weary in their struggle to live the Christian life in their own strength.

**Are weary** ([2872](#))(**kopiao** from **kopos** = labor, fatigue) This root word **kopos** (see word study) is used in secular Greek of "a beating," "weariness" (as though one had been beaten) and "exertion," was the proper word for physical tiredness induced by work, exertion or heat. **Kopiao** means to exhibit great effort and exertion, to the point of sweat and exhaustion. To physically become worn out, weary or faint. To engage in hard work with the implication of difficulty and trouble. The work described by kopiao was left one so weary it was as if the person had taken a beating. **Kopiao** describes not so much the actual exertion as the weariness which follows the straining of all one's powers to the utmost. Figuratively **kopiao** means to become emotionally fatigued and/or discouraged and thus to lose heart and/or give up. The **present tense** presents the pathetic picture of one who is persistently physically weary and tired, spiritually exhausted, discouraged and ready to "throw in the towel"! **Does that describe you dear reader? Then Jesus' words of promised presence and power are perfect for you dear weary one!**

**John MacArthur** - **Weary** translates a present active participle and refers figuratively to arduous toil in seeking to please God and know the way of salvation. Jesus calls to Himself everyone who is exhausted from trying to find and please God in his own resources. Jesus invites the person who is wearied from his vain search for truth through human wisdom, who is exhausted from trying to earn salvation, and who has despaired of achieving God's standard of righteousness by his own efforts.

**Illustration of Very, Very Weary** - The date was August 15, 1930. On that day, a 45-year-old New York State Supreme Court Justice named Joseph Crater, after spending an evening eating out with friends, hailed a taxi and was never seen or heard from again. It remains one of the most mystifying Missing Person cases in FBI files. The FBI immediately suspected a kidnapping by someone who held a judicial grudge against Justice Crater. But that didn't seem to pan out. They then suspected Mafia activity because Justice Crater was an enemy of the Mafia. But, again, that led nowhere. There is only one clue which remains to this day. When Mrs. Crater returned to their apartment the evening her husband disappeared, there on the table was a large check made out to her and a note attached to the check in her husband's handwriting which simply said, "I am very, very tired. Love, Joe" Maybe you can relate to Joe Carter— tired and stressed out in life thoughts of Checking out! 2% of Americans are regularly dealing with stress –Those most likely to deal with stress are those in their 40's.

I walked life's path with worry,  
Disturbed and quite unblest,  
Until I trusted Jesus;  
Now faith has given **REST**.  
-HGB

**Spurgeon**....expounds on the meaning of weary..."all ye that labor," in whatever form.

In the service of formal religion, in the attempt to keep the law, or in any other way of self-justification.

In the service of self to get gain, honor, ease, etc.

In the service of the world to discover, invent, legislate, etc.

In the service of Satan, lust, drink, infidelity, etc.

**J C Philpot** on "weary"...

The Lord's purpose in laying burdens upon us is to weary us out. We cannot learn our religion in any other way. We cannot learn it from the Bible, nor from the experience of others. It must be a personal work, wrought in the heart of each; and we must be brought, all of us, if ever we are to find rest in Christ, to be absolutely wearied out of sin and self, and to have no righteousness, goodness, or holiness of our own.

The effect, then, of all spiritual labor is to bring us to this point: to be weary of the world, for we feel it, for the

most part, to be a valley of tears; to be weary of self, for it is our greatest plague; weary of professors, for we cannot see in them the grace of God, which alone we prize and value; weary of the profane, for their ungodly conversation only hurts our minds; weary of our bodies, for they are often full of sickness and pain, and always clogs to our soul; and weary of life, for we see the emptiness of those things which to most people make life so agreeable.

By this painful experience we come to this point: to be worn out and wearied; and there we must come, before we can rest entirely on Christ.

As long as we can rest in the world, we shall rest in it. As long as the things of time and sense can gratify us, we shall be gratified in them. As long as we can find anything pleasing in self, we shall be pleased with it. As long as anything visible and tangible can satisfy us, we shall be satisfied with them.

But when we get weary of all things visible, tangible, and sensible—wearied of ourselves, and of all things here below—then we want to rest upon Christ, and Christ alone.

**Heavy laden** (5412) (**phortizo** from **phortos** = something carried [Acts 27:10 = freight of a ship], from **phero** = to bring or carry) means to load or burden with something, to cause someone to carry something, to overburden. Phortizo in a figurative sense describes overburdening someone spiritually (with ceremony, rules, laws, etc).

In the only other NT use Jesus used phortizo to describe the lawyers (prototypical "legalists" in a spiritual sense) placing impossible religious demands on the the people, especially the "burden" of keeping the law.

Luke 11:46 But He said, "Woe to you lawyers as well! For you **weigh** men **down** (verb - phortizo) with burdens (noun - phortion) hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers.

**Heavy laden** here in Matthew is in the **perfect tense** which describes a past completed action (at some point they became weary) with ongoing effect (they are still weary). They are pictured as overloaded like beasts of burden.

**MacArthur** adds that in the passive voice the idea is "that at some time in the past a great load was dumped on the wearied person." He goes to explains that while "**weary** refers to the internal exhaustion caused by seeking divine truth through human wisdom, **heavy-laden** suggests the external burdens caused by the futile efforts of works righteousness."

**Jesus** bore every burden we could never bear, just as prophesied by Isaiah...

**Surely our griefs He Himself bore,**  
And our sorrows He carried;  
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten of God, and afflicted.  
Isaiah 53:4+

**Spurgeon** writes that all who are "heavy laden" are called....

Laden heavily because weary, vexed, disappointed; despairing.

Laden with sin, guilt, dread, remorse, fear of death.

Laden with care, anxiety, greed, ambition, etc.

Laden with sorrow, poverty, oppression, slander, etc.

Laden with doubt, temptation, conflict, inner faintness, etc.

**James Montgomery Boice** explains that "The phrase "**weary and burdened**" does not refer to physical weaknesses or to what we might call the burdens of a difficult life, though it may include them. **It chiefly refers to a sense of sin's burden and the need of a Savior.** The context makes this clear, for the earlier verses describe the rejection of John the Baptist and Jesus by the Jewish masses, followed by the Lord's denunciation of Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum for their failure to repent at Jesus' preaching. **They were not burdened by sin. They were getting along just fine.** Still, there were people who were burdened, and these people believed that Jesus could lift sin's weight and turned to him to do it. **These people listened to Him, trusted Him, and found salvation.** (The Gospel of Matthew - Baker Books)

**I will give you rest** - Note that we are not invited to come to a **doctrine which is systematic** (as good and necessary as that might be), but to a **Savior Who is Divine**, to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself is our Rest! **Are you learning how to abide in Him, to rest in Him?** If not, you will grow weary even of "well doing"! It seems that many of God's children are growing weary of following Jesus, and are being swept away into the bypaths of this technologically tempting, but temporal world system which is

headed by Satan (1Jn 5:19). As a result many of God's children are restless ("weary and heavy-laden") and desperately need to hear and heed Jesus' sweet call to "Come" to Him. He will give a rest the world can neither give nor understand!

**Paul** gives us a clue to how we can learn to abide and shows us the "fruit" of this learning...

Not that I speak from want; for **I have learned** to be content in whatever circumstances I am (Test question - Do you give thanks in every circumstance? 1Th 5:18 Do you consider it all joy when you encounter various trials? James 1:2. As you practice these disciplines of gratitude and joy, you will come more and more to learn that it is only as you relinquish your "rights", your "power" and rely on the indwelling enabling power of the Holy Spirit that you will begin to learn the secret of the "Christ life".). 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance **I have learned** the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Phil 4:11, 12, 13+)

**I will give** - Rest is a divine gift, but note that Jesus' promise of rest is conditional. It is conditioned on the individual making the personal choice to "**Come**" at His bidding! He is "**gentle and humble in heart**" and so He will not coerce or force us to come to Him against our will!

**Thomas Brooks** writes on "I will give you rest"... "**Come**," says Christ, "**and I will give you rest.**" I will not show you rest, nor barely tell you of rest, but I will **give you rest**. I am faithfulness itself, and cannot lie, I will give you rest. I who have the greatest power to give it, the greatest will to give it, the greatest right to give it, come, laden sinners, and I will **give you rest**. Rest is the most desirable good, the most suitable good, and to you the greatest good. **Come**, says Christ; that is, believe in Me, and I will give you rest; I will give you peace with God, and peace with conscience: I will turn your storm into an everlasting calm; I will give you such rest, that the world can neither give to you nor take from you.

*Lord, Thou madest us for Thyself,  
and we can find no **rest** till we find **rest** in Thee!*

-- Augustine

*How blest Thy saints! How safely led!  
How surely kept! How richly fed!  
Saviour of all in earth and sea,  
How happy they who **rest** in Thee!*  
-Henry Francis Lyte

Note that this rest is not just any **rest**, but is rest which is given by Jesus. In Hebrews 4:3 and Hebrews 4:5 the writer quotes God as describing the rest available to believers as "**My rest**". Therefore this rest is in every sense a divine rest, the rest the Creator Himself enjoys, a rest that is joyous, satisfying and productive, in every sense a supernatural rest. Can you grasp that incredible truth? In a world that is becoming increasingly **restless**, believers have the invitation to trust in a quality of **rest** that is literally "other worldly."

*There are many heads resting on Christ's bosom,  
but there's room for yours there.*

Samuel Rutherford

**David Lowery** on **rest** - The rest Jesus provides is the security that relationship with him brings to people. It is membership in the family of God (12:46-50) that brings assurance of care for present needs (Mt 6:8, 25-34; Mt 7:11) and the expectation of blessing in the world to come (Mt 5:2-12). The disciples are authorized to pronounce God's peace on those who receive them and their message (Mt 10:13). It is the assurance of this peace from God that Jesus mediates (Mt 10:27) ([Bible Knowledge Key Word Study](#))

**Oswald Chambers** comments that Jesus says..."I will give you rest," i.e., I will stay (**Ed**: Support you from sinking, sustain you with strength) you. Not - *I will put you to bed and hold your hand and sing you to sleep* but - *I will get you out of bed, out of the languor and exhaustion, out of the state of being half dead while you are alive; I will imbue you with the spirit of life, and you will be stayed by the perfection of vital activity.*

**David** who was often surrounded by tumultuous circumstances (and had learned to rest in the Lord) wrote...

***Rest** in the LORD and wait patiently for Him.  
Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,  
Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.*  
(Psalm 37:7)

**Comment:** **Rest** in this psalm is a verb and is in the form of a command for the reader to rest and be quiet in God, which parallels Jesus' command to **Come** and enter into His blessed rest!

As we have alluded to earlier, every believer enters the rest of justification and that only once, but then every believer must learn to enter His blessed, divine rest daily, yea, even moment by moment. It is available, but it requires a choice to trust Him (see more discussion on this topic below). And so when the circumstances of the day seem too much to bear, we do well to recall that there is always an invitation to share the yoke with One Whose strength never fails and the result is rest for our souls.

### **Are you learning the secret of daily entering into the Savior's rest and experiencing His soul calming presence and power?**

In light of the preciousness of God's **rest**, the writer of Hebrews exhorted his readers...

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that **rest**, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:11)

**Comment:** While this passage is referring in context to the rest of salvation (justification), the principle is still applicable to believers to be diligent to enter the rest Jesus provides continually in our journey of sanctification.

**Rest** (refresh) (373)(**anapauo** from **ana** = again, back, or even as intensifying the meaning of the verb + **pauo** = to cease or give rest) means to cause someone to become physically refreshed as the result of resting from work which is what Jesus did with his disciples in Mark 6:31. **Anapauo** can also refer to **spiritual refreshment** or **revival** which is Jesus' sense here in Mt 11:28.

#### **Related Resource -**

- Rest in the Bible - A good topic to meditate on if you have signs of "spiritual burnout"

**Vine** writes that "anapauo signifies "to cause or permit one to cease from any labor or movement" so as to recover strength. It implies previous toil and care. Its chief significance is that of taking, or causing to take, rest; it is used in the middle voice in Luke 12:19, "take (thine) ease," indicative of unnecessary, self-indulgent relaxation. In the papyri it is used technically, as an agricultural term.

Our English word "**refresh**" means to restore or give new strength or energy to, to invigorate, to relieve after fatigue, to reanimate after depression, to revive what is drooping, to restore or maintain by renewing supply. Each of these nuances could be applied to our spiritual life and the effect of the rest that Jesus gives us when we come to Him. For example, when Jesus refreshes, He restores our strength or gives us new spiritual strength, He relieves our spiritual fatigue, He revives our drooping spirits, etc.

In Jesus' parable of the rich farmer (Lk 12:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23), He contrasts **rest** with **anxiety** about this life and its attendant fear of being without earthly possessions (which usually end up "possessing" the possessor!)...

And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; **take your ease** (Young's Literal = "**be resting**" - **anapauo** is in the present imperative - he is "preaching" to his soul to rest - contrast the "Jesus way" - simply come to Him, take His yoke, learn from Him, then you receive supernatural rest, not the ethereal, fleeting "rest" the world and worldly possessions offer! There is simply no comparison!), eat, drink and be merry." (Luke 12:19)

In this parable, the "rich man" thought that he could **rest** (take ease) in the fact that he had earthly goods, but Jesus shattered this false hope (for him and for all who trust in earthly possessions) by pointing out that **true rest** comes from knowing that the Father in heaven cares for us (Lk 12:24, 28, 30, 31) and will provide all we need (cp Php 4:19).

When we're discouraged spiritually  
And fear and doubt assail our soul,  
We may just need to **REST** awhile  
Before God heals and makes us whole.  
—Sper

**Rest for the restless soul** is found in the Word, in Jesus the Incarnate Word Who invites us to **'Come'**...

For thus the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength." (Isa. 30:15)

Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth His name,  
From age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.  
Martin Luther

**J Vernon McGee** in his commentary on the book of Ruth writes that...

This is a **rest** that only a Godly Redeemer can provide. It is the **rest of redemption**. After God created the heavens and the earth, Scripture instructs us that He **rested**. That was a Creation Rest. All was good and complete, and nothing needed to be done to improve it. Then man sinned, and God broke His creation rest. "His ox was in the ditch," and God began to move to get man out of the ditch of sin. From that day on, God has not rested. Christ said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). God will not rest until redemption is finished and sin is destroyed....The **redemption rest** that is provided today for a lost sinner is to cease from his own works and trust his Redeemer-Kinsman to provide his rest. Hebrews 4:9, 10 tells us, "There remains therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His." This is the **rest** that comes when we no longer trust our works but receive His work of redemption on the Cross as the penalty for our sins. Furthermore, we are instructed to **rest in Him daily** and to commit our every problem and difficulty to Him, as Peter wrote, "Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you" (1Pet 5:7). **Only in our great Redeemer is there rest for the restless heart of man from the threshing floor of this world, with its chaff, stubble, and crowd.** (Ruth and Esther : Women of faith)

Can you trust God to take care of your needs? There is no rest in this life without trust in His life giving provisions. As believers, those who have experienced the initial reality of resting our restless hearts in Christ, what is the greatest problem we face? Do we believe God can meet it? Can we—will we—trust him? If so, God's Word, in the present passage, the Incarnate Word Himself, offers rest. **Spurgeon** said that "Faith is reason at **rest** in God." The writer of Hebrews said "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). "Now we who have believed enter that rest" (Hebrews 4:3).

#### **Reality, Reality,**

Lord Jesus Christ Thou art to me.

From the spectral mist and the driving clouds,  
From the shifting shadows and phantom crowds  
From unreal words and unreal lives,  
Where truth with falsehood feebly strives:  
From the passings away, the chance and change,  
Flickerings, vanishings, swift and strange,

**I turn to my glorious REST in Thee,**

**Who art the grand Reality.**

—Frances Havergal

#### **FIND REST O MY SOUL IN JESUS ALONE!**

**James Smith** reminds us as believers...

There is no rest for the Christian in this world. There will be always something to disturb, perplex or distress him; it is an enemy's land.

But Jesus says, "I will give you rest." He does so by enabling us to . . .rely on His Word, recognize His hand, submit to His will, and trust in His perfect work.

He assures us . . . that our sins are forgiven; that we are safe in His keeping; that His presence shall always be with us; and that all things shall work together for our eternal good.

We can rest on His faithfulness—for He has been tried, and found faithful.

We can rest on His love—for He loves us to the uttermost.

We can rest on His power—for it is ever engaged on our behalf.

We can rest on His covenant—for it is ordered in all things and sure.

We can rest on His blood—for it speaks peace, pardon, and acceptance with God.

We can rest at His feet—for there we are safe, and can never be injured.

We cannot rest . . . on our graces, on our comforts, on our friends, or on our possessions.

**We may rest on Jesus alone.**

**Return to your rest, O my soul,**

For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

For Thou hast rescued my soul from death,

My eyes from tears, My feet from stumbling.

Psalm 116:7,8

**Spurgeon comments:** He calls the rest still his own, and feels full liberty to return to it. What a mercy it is that even if our soul has left its rest for a while we can tell it -- "it is thy rest still." The Psalmist had evidently been somewhat disturbed in mind, his troubles had ruffled his spirit but now with a sense of answered prayer upon him he quiets his soul. He had rested before, for he knew the blessed repose of faith, and therefore he returns to the God who had been the refuge of his soul in former days. Even as a bird flies to its nest, so does his soul fly to his God. Whenever a child of God even for a moment loses his peace of mind, he should be concerned to find it again, not by seeking it in the world or in his own experience, but in the Lord alone. When the believer prays, and the Lord inclines his ear, the road to the old rest is before him, let him not be slow to follow it.

**John Newton** asks...

**HOW is this rest to be obtained?** Blessed be God, in that way which alone can render it attainable by such unworthy indigent creatures. If it was to be bought—we have nothing to offer for it. If it was given as a reward of merit—we can do nothing to deserve it. But Jesus has said, "**I will give you rest!**" Our title to it cost Him dear; He purchased it for us with His own blood; but to us it comes freely. Sincere faith in Jesus puts us in immediate possession of the first-fruits, the pledge of this inheritance; and faith will lead us powerfully and safely, through all hindrances and enemies, to the full enjoyment of the whole.

FAITH unites us to Christ; gives us an immediate interest in all the benefits of His life, death, and intercession; opens the way of communication for all needful supplies of grace here, and insures to us the accomplishment of all the Lord has spoken to us of, in a state of glory. "He who believes shall be saved;" (Mark 16:16) —saved in defiance of all the opposition of earth and hell; saved, notwithstanding he is in himself unstable as water, weak as a bruised reed, and helpless as a newborn babe! What Jesus will give—none can take away. **Only remember that it is a free gift.** Receive it thankfully—and rejoice in the Giver. Let Him have all the glory of His own undertaking. Renounce every other hope and every other plea—but His promise and mediation. Commit your souls to Him—and then fear nothing. "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms!" (Dt 33:27) He will fight your battles, heal your wounds, refresh your fainting spirits, guide you by His counsel while here, and at last receive you to Himself! ([The Present and Future Rest of True Believers](#))

**Spurgeon's** notes on Mt 11:28...

This text is often preached from, but never too often, since the sorrows with which it deals always abound, and the remedy is always effective. This time we purpose to view it from our Lord's side. He entreats the weary to come to him. He beseeches them to learn of him. He not only receives those who come, but begs them to come. What is this desire which burns in his bosom? And whence comes it?

Let us carefully consider—

**I. WHO IS HE?**

1. One who has been rejected, yet he cries "Come unto me."
2. One whose rejection involves us in fearful guilt, yet he is ready to forgive, and to bestow rest upon us if we come.
3. One who knows his Father's purpose, but fears not to give a pressing invitation to all who labor and are heavy laden.

4. One who has all power to receive such as come, and to give rest to them all. This is no vain invitation saying more than it means.

5. One who as the Son of God is infinitely blessed, and yet finds new joy in giving rest to poor restless men.

## II. WHOM DOES HE CALL, AND WHY?

1. Laborers, with more than they can do: disquieted, unhappy. These he calls to himself that he may give them rest, and cause them to find rest.

2. Heavy laden ones, with more than they can bear: oppressed, sorrowful, ready to die.

3. The poor and illiterate who need to be taught.

4. The spiritually burdened, who much need a helping hand, and can only find it in him.

## III. WHAT CAUSES HIS DESIRE FOR THEM?

Not his own need of them.

Not their personal worthiness.

Nor aught that they are or can ever be. But,—

1. He has a love to our race.

“My delights were with the sons of men”: Pr 8:31.

He would have these resting with himself.

2. He is himself a man, and knows the needs of men.

3. He has done so much to buy us rest that he would fain give it to us.

4. He delights to do more and more for us: it is his joy to give good things to men.

5. He knows what our ruin will be unless we find rest in him.

6. He knows what our bliss will be if we come unto him.

## IV. HOW THEN SHALL WE TREAT THIS CALL?

1. It is very earnest, let us heed it.

2. It is very simple, let the poorest seize upon it.

3. It exactly suits us. Does it not suit you?

4. It is very gracious, let us accept it.

**A W Pink** asks...

What did our Lord here signify, when He bade all the weary and heavy laden to **come unto Him**?

It is quite evident that coming to Christ is something more than a physical act. Coming to Christ in the sense He here invited, is a going out of the soul after Him, a desire for Him, a seeking after Him, a personal embracing of and trusting in Him. It is the heart turning from the love of sin—to the love of holiness; from Self—to the Savior!

A saving coming to Christ denotes a turning our backs upon the world—and turning our hearts unto Him as our only Hope and Portion. It is the abandoning of every idol—and the surrendering of ourselves to His Lordship. It is the repudiation of our own righteousness and every dependency, and the heart going out to Him in loving submission and trustful confidence. It is the entire going out of Self with all its resolutions and performances, to cast ourselves upon His grace and mercy. It is the will yielding itself up to His authority to be molded by Him, and to follow Him wherever He may lead.

In short, coming to Christ is the whole soul of a guilty and self-condemned sinner—turning unto a whole Christ, in the exercise of all our faculties, responding to His claims upon us, prepared to unreservedly trust, sincerely love, and devotedly serve Him. ([Excerpt from The Call of Christ](#))

**J C Ryle** asks...

What is the invitation to the laboring and heavy laden? Jesus says, "come unto me."

I love that word "Come." To me it seems full of grace, mercy and encouragement. "Come now," says the Lord in Isaiah, "and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow."

Come is the word put in the mouth of the king's messenger in the parable of the guest-supper: "All is now ready; come unto the marriage."

Come is the last word in the Bible to sinners. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come."

Jesus does not say, "Go and get ready." This is the word of the Pharisee and self-righteous. "Go and work out a righteousness. Do this and that and be saved." Jesus says, Come.

Jesus does not say "Send."...Jesus says Come.

Jesus does not say "Wait." This is the word of the enthusiast and the fanatic. "You can do nothing. You must not ask; you cannot pray; you must sit still." Cold comfort for troubled souls. Jesus says come.

Come is a word of merciful invitation. It seems to say, "I want you to escape the wrath to come. I am not willing that any should perish. I have no pleasure in death. I would gladly have all men saved, and I offer all the water of life freely. So come to Me."

Come is a word of gracious expectation. It seems to say, "I am here waiting for you. I sit on my mercy-seat expecting you to come. I wait to be gracious. I wait for more sinners to come in before I close the door. I want more names written down in the book of life before it is closed forever. So come to Me."

Come is a word of kind encouragement. It seems to say, I have got treasures to bestow if you will only receive them. I have that to give which makes it worth while to come: a free pardon, a robe of righteousness, a new heart, a star of peace. So come to Me.

Brethren, I ask you to hear these words and lay them to heart. I plead for my Master; I stand here an ambassador; I ask you to come and be reconciled to God.

I ask you to come with all your sins, however many they may be. If you come to Him they will be taken away. I ask you to come as you are. You feel unfit; you say you are not good enough. The worse you think yourself, the better prepared you are. Christ is not a Savior of those who think they are righteous—but of sinners. I ask you to come now. No other time is your own. The opportunity past, the door will be shut, and yourself dead. Come now. Come to Christ.

Ah! brethren, I fear that many of you will not take one saving step—will not come to Christ. You go on content with your own devices, like Balaam; like Felix, you never finally come to Christ.

I warn you plainly that you may come to church, and come to the Lord's table, and come to the minister, and yet never be saved. The one thing needed is actual coming to the Savior, actual coming to the Fountain, actual washing in the blood of atonement. Except you do this, you will die in your sins.

Gird up your loins like a man, and resolve that you will come. Do you feel vile and unworthy to come? Tell it to Jesus. Do you feel as if you know not what to say and do when you come? Tell it to Jesus. Tell Him you are all sin; tell Him you are all weakness; tell Him you feel as if you had no faith and no power, no grace and no strength, no goodness and no love—but come to Him, and commit your soul to His charge. Let nothing keep you back from Christ.

Tell Him you have heard that He receives sinners; that you are such a one, and you want to be saved. Tell Him you have nothing to plead but His own word—but He said Come, and therefore you come to Him. ([Come Unto Me](#))

**Octavius Winslow** adds that...

The life of faith is a constant coming to Jesus for daily, hourly, and fresh supplies.

Let every circumstance and event, every trial, sorrow, and need, be an echo of the gracious life inspiring words: "Go to Jesus!"

Go to Jesus, confessing sin. Go to Jesus, unveiling grief. Go to Jesus, telling need. Go to Jesus, breathing love, desire, and hope.

You are still in the land of famine and of need. But your heavenly Father would remind you that He has anticipated and provided . . .for all your requirements, for all your history, for your daily demands, in Him whom whose fullness fills all in all.

Take the hard heart, or the broken heart; take the cold heart, or the glowing heart; take your barrenness, or your fruitfulness; take the sunbeam of prosperity, or the cloud of adversity; take the joy, take the sorrow; take all to Jesus!

Let Him participate in all, keep you in all, sympathize with all; for Jesus is your Brother, raised up to befriend, relieve, and preserve you in your time of need.

**J C Philpot** asks...

Are you ever weary . . . of the world, of sin, of self, of everything below the skies?

If so, you want something to give you rest.

You look to SELF—it is but shifting sand, tossed here and there with the restless tide, and ever casting up mire and dirt. No holding ground; no anchorage; no rest there.

You look to OTHERS—you see what man is, even the very best of men in their best state—how fickle, how unstable, how changing and changeable; how weak even when willing to help; how more likely to add to, than relieve your distress; if desirous to sympathize with and comfort you in trouble and sorrow, how short his arm to help, how unsatisfactory his aid to relieve! You find no rest there.

You lean upon the WORLD—it is but a broken reed which runs into your hand and pierces you. You find no rest there.

So look where you will, there is no rest for the sole of your foot.

**John MacDuff** addresses the question...

"Oh, where can rest be found?" This is the cry of weary, care worn humanity.

This is the cry embracing every nation and every climate, from the yearnings of heathendom to the longings and aspirations of the present hour. From the tumultuous sea of the world's unrest, this cry has gone up like a dirge of baffled souls, "Oh, where can rest be found?"

"Come unto me," is the address of many siren voices, titillating tones of questionable or forbidden pleasure, leading only to . . . unrest, disquiet, heart weariness, life failure; tinted soap bubbles with a momentary iridescence, then collapsing.

The existence of many is a pursuit after spurious and counterfeit rest, misnamed "happiness"; an aimless, vapid life of pleasure; engrossed with objects which bring with them no sense of satisfaction; a dull, weary round on the world's monotonous treadmill.

Some strive to find rest through the gateway of ethical systems and philosophic tenets.

Others, through the gateway of human merit.

Others through . . . ceremonial observances, fasts and vigils, penances and pilgrimages, rites and ceremonies, creeds and dogmas.

These, and such as these, are alike spurious and unavailing.

"Oh, where can rest be found?"

Matthew 11:28 is the answer, the only real answer!

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### **Come to Me Matthew 11:28-30**

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

**Reflect** What problems in your life are you trying to solve on your own? What has God told you about that through this lesson? Have you ever experienced the freedom that comes from giving your difficulties to Jesus?

I'm the oldest of several children in my family. When I was younger, I thought I could help my parents by being a sort of "junior parent." I could fix my sibling's problems and Mom and Dad didn't even have to be bothered. What I realized after my parents talked to me is that 1) my "fixing" only made things worse, and 2) my parents wanted to be involved in their children's lives--it wasn't a bother.

Now that I'm older, I see that I'm not the only one with the habit of trying to "fix" things. Only it's often about fixing our own problems without bothering God. It's when we think, God can't be bothered with my problems. He wouldn't even be interested.

The Bible says otherwise. "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30, ESV)

"Come to me," Jesus says. Jesus doesn't want to sit on the sidelines.

"All you who labor and are heavy laden." Life is hard and we make it impossible when we try to carry our burdens and fix our problems ourselves.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me." When farmers used oxen to plow, one ox alone couldn't plow an entire field. But two oxen, bound together with a yoke would more than double their power and together accomplish what one alone could not. Jesus says, "Join me, I will supply the power you lack."

"For I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." This isn't boot camp; Jesus is not your drill sergeant. He's your Savior and Friend, your Comforter and Strength. Because He lived as a man, He knows how hard life gets, and He wants to help you.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." After my parents talked to me, life got a lot easier. I was still responsible to them and they were still my parents, but I no longer felt the burden of trying to fix or control things that I couldn't.

It's the same with Jesus. He wants to carry your burdens, and He will when you walk with Him.

Pray Lord Jesus, take my burdens. I want to find rest and peace in You. Amen. ([Courtesy of Back to the Bible](#))

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### **Norman Geisler - [When Critics Ask](#)**

MATTHEW 11:28–30—Is Jesus' yoke easy or hard?

PROBLEM: Jesus said here, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." However, Hebrews declares that "whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives" (Heb. 12:6). Which is it—easy or hard?

SOLUTION: These verses are referring to different aspects of the Christian life. The life of a believer is "easy" in that it brings "rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:29), but it is hard on the "flesh," which often needs the disciplining hand of God to keep it in line. Salvation brings "peace with God" (Rom. 5:1), but it also brings conflict with the world (1 John 2:15–17; Gal. 5:17). The Apostle Paul himself experienced God's grace in his life, but he also had a thorn in his flesh (2 Cor. 12:7–9).

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**LEARNING TO REST** (Isaiah 30:15) - Many Christians are anxious and troubled. Although they are experiencing the "rest" of salvation that accompanies the forgiveness of sins and are looking forward to the eternal "rest" of heaven, their souls are still in turmoil. Fearful and doubting, they seem to be continually burdened by life's problems. A closer look at their anxiety can reveal the reason for their distress. Having never learned to rest in the Lord, they fail to experience the "quietness and confidence" (Isaiah 30:15) that comes to those who daily fellowship with Him through Bible study and prayer.

An unknown author has penned a verse describing the problem:

We mutter and sputter, we fume and we spurt;  
We mumble and grumble, our feelings get hurt;  
We can't understand things, our vision grows dim,  
When all that we need is communion with Him!

Don't let yourself become a victim of fruitless fretting. If you do, you'll lose the peace and joy that is your rightful heritage. Instead, set aside part of each day to talk with God, thanking Him for who He is and what He has done for you. Then, by reading His word and believing His comforting promises, your faith will grow stronger and a supernatural peace will flood your soul. Jesus said, "Come to Me,...and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28). Have you learned to rest in Him? - Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When we put our problems in God's hands,  
He puts His peace in our hearts.

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A band of explorers in Africa hired some villagers to help them on their journey through the jungle. The group set out and pushed on relentlessly for several days. Finally the tribesmen sat down and would go no farther. When asked the reason, their leader answered, "We've been going too fast. We must pause and wait for our souls to catch up with our bodies!"

Many Christians who have overextended themselves in a flurry of church activities or other worthwhile pursuits have experienced a similar feeling. Being so preoccupied with helping others, they suddenly feel as if they have left behind the most important part of themselves—their soul. They have lost intimate contact with the Lord.

If our schedule leaves no time for rest and nurturing our spiritual life, we are just too busy! God does not ask us to be constantly on the go, rushing here and there. Sometimes He wants us to "rest a while" so that our souls can "catch up" and be refreshed for the challenges that lie ahead.—H. G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## LEARNING AS A WAY OF LIFE

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me . . . and you will find rest for your souls. MATTHEW 11:29

"My dad pointed out to me something that Charles Spurgeon pointed out to him," wrote pastor Dane Ortlund in *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers*. "In the four Gospel accounts given to us in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John— eighty-nine chapters of biblical text— there's only one place where Jesus tells us about his own heart." That place is described in today's Scripture verse: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:29).

As we've studied godly learning together this month, we've seen that learning can be hard work. It can involve suffering. It definitely requires uncomfortable change and growth. Are we ready to put on Christ's yoke and learn from Him? We may assume that we have to grit our teeth and begin. But here Jesus says we will find "rest" for our souls? Yes, learning from Jesus is restful because our Teacher is humble and gentle. His invitation is "pure joy" (James 1:2).

Jesus praised the Father for revealing the truth of His redemptive plan to His followers, rather than to the Pharisees and other religious leaders (vv. 25–26). This reminds us that God often overturns the knowledge of the "wise and learned" for His own purposes. In the same way the Father revealed the Son to those He chose, the Son also reveals the Father to whomever He chooses (v. 27). The ultimate content of real learning always centers around God Himself.

This leads into the call to come and learn from Jesus (vv. 28–30). Yes, we'll need to pick up our crosses and carry them in the footsteps of our Master (Luke 9:23–26). But on the journey, we'll learn that His yoke is easy and His burden is light (see also Jer. 6:16; 1 John 5:3).

>> Reflect on this month's study (or reread your notes if you've been taking them). What are your top three takeaways or insights? How will you pursue learning from God in the year ahead?

Pray with Us Father, for all the sacrifice You ask of us, You provide what we lack to obey You. Thank You for making us not just Your servants, but Your beloved children. We trust You and worship You for Your perfect love. BY [Brad Baurain](#)

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**REST BY THE FIRE** - When guests at The Houstonian Hotel in Houston, Texas, enter the main lobby on a searingly hot summer day, they are often surprised to see flames dancing in a huge stone fireplace. If it's scorching outside and the air conditioning is humming away, why have a fire burning inside? Because people like to gather around a fire. The gas logs don't produce much heat, but there's something warm, inviting, and relaxing about the flickering light. It seems to say, "Pull up a chair, sit down, and rest awhile."

As I read the Bible, I often sense that weary, anxious people were drawn to Jesus Christ in much the same way that travelers today are drawn toward the fireplace in that Texas hotel.

A Christian who loves Jesus is sometimes said to be "on fire for the Lord." What a great way to describe the warm, inviting presence of Christ that radiates from the lives of His children before the eyes of weary people in a troubled world! —D. C. M. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**RESTING ON JESUS** - A missionary in Africa experienced great difficulty in trying to translate the Gospel of John into the local dialect. He faced the problem of finding a word for believe. When he came to that particular word, he always had to leave a blank space.

Then one day a runner came panting into the camp, having traveled a great distance with a very important message. After blurting out his story, he fell exhausted into a hammock nearby. He muttered a brief phrase that seemed to express both his great weariness and his contentment at finding such a delightful place of relaxation. The missionary, never having heard these words before, asked a bystander what the runner had said. "Oh, he is saying, 'I'm at the end of myself, therefore I am resting all of my weight here!'" The missionary exclaimed, "Praise God! That is the very expression I need for the word believe!"

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#### **ILLUSTRATION - The Farmer's Yoke**

A farmer has two oxen yoked together to plow a field. One is an older, stronger ox, experienced in the task, while the other is young and inexperienced. The stronger ox bears most of the weight of the yoke, guiding and supporting the younger one.

Lesson: When we take on Jesus' yoke, we are like the younger ox. He bears the brunt of the burden and guides us with His strength and wisdom, making our load manageable.

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#### **ILLUSTRATION - The Heavy Backpack**

A hiker struggles up a steep mountain trail, carrying an overloaded backpack filled with unnecessary items. Another hiker approaches and offers to exchange backpacks. The second hiker's pack is light and carefully prepared, and the struggling hiker accepts, finding the journey now far more enjoyable.

Lesson: Jesus invites us to exchange the burdens of life—stress, guilt, and self-reliance—for His light and purposeful load, freeing us to walk with peace and joy.

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#### **ILLUSTRATION - The Lighthouse in the Storm**

A sailor caught in a violent storm desperately tries to navigate the treacherous waters. Exhausted and losing hope, they see the steady light of a lighthouse guiding them to a safe harbor. The sailor stops striving and follows the light, finally reaching rest.

Lesson: Like the lighthouse, Jesus provides rest and guidance in the storms of life. He offers a refuge where we can stop striving and find peace.

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#### **ILLUSTRATION - The Gentle Teacher**

A student struggles under the pressure of learning a difficult subject with an impatient and harsh teacher. Frustrated and overwhelmed, the student transfers to another class where the new teacher is patient, kind, and explains everything clearly. The student not only learns but finds joy in the process.

Lesson: Jesus is the gentle and humble teacher who makes life's lessons bearable and even joyful when we trust Him to lead and guide us.

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#### **ILLUSTRATION - The Broken Cart**

A farmer's cart is overloaded with goods, and the wheels begin to break under the weight. Another farmer comes along with a sturdy wagon and offers to help carry the load. The first farmer gratefully accepts, and the journey continues with ease.

Lesson: Our human efforts often lead to burnout and brokenness, but Jesus invites us to give Him our burdens, offering His strength and resources in return.

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#### **ILLUSTRATION - . The Child and the Parent**

A child struggles to carry a large, heavy box across the room, grunting with effort. The parent steps in, takes the box, and carries it effortlessly, while the child walks beside them, now free to enjoy the journey.

Lesson: Jesus invites us to stop trying to carry life's burdens alone. When we give them to Him, He takes the weight, allowing us to walk beside Him with peace and trust.

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#### **ILLUSTRATION - The Restful Chair**

After a long day of labor, a worker finally finds a comfortable chair to sit in and rest. The chair doesn't eliminate the worker's tasks,

but it provides relief and refreshment, allowing the worker to regain strength for what lies ahead.

Lesson: Jesus doesn't promise to remove all life's responsibilities, but He offers rest for our souls, giving us the strength and peace to continue.

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### **ILLUSTRATION** - The Anchor for the Soul

A ship is tossed about on the open sea, vulnerable to the winds and waves. When the captain drops the anchor, the ship stabilizes, finding security despite the surrounding storm.

Lesson: Jesus offers rest and stability in the chaotic storms of life, anchoring us in His peace and care.

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### **ILLUSTRATION** - The Load-Bearing Wall

A house with a collapsing ceiling is reinforced by a load-bearing wall, which takes on the weight and prevents the house from falling apart.

Lesson: Jesus is the load-bearer for our lives, offering to take on what we cannot handle and holding us up when we feel like we're falling.

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### **ILLUSTRATION** - The Shepherd's Rest

A shepherd leads their sheep to green pastures after a long journey. The sheep rest, eat, and drink without fear, knowing they are cared for and protected by the shepherd.

Lesson: Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, offers rest and refreshment for our souls when we trust Him to lead us.

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**REST IN THE STORM** - I heard about a submarine that was on patrol during wartime and had to remain submerged overnight. When it resurfaced the next day, a friend on another ship radioed the captain, "How did you fare in that terrible storm last night?" Surprised, the officer exclaimed, "What storm? We didn't know there was one!" Although the ocean's surface had been whipped into huge waves by high winds, the vessel was not affected because the waters below remained calm and tranquil.

Someone once outlined the words of Isaiah 26:3 this way:

You—a Precious God.

Perfect peace—a Priceless Possession.

Whose mind is stayed on You—a Present focus.

Because he trusts in You—a Powerful faith.

The believer who is confident of God's providence, who rests in His grace, and who relies on His Holy Spirit will experience the miracle of His quieting peace. —H. G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When we fix our mind on Jesus,  
He keeps our mind at rest.

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From nature we can learn a lesson about the importance of rest. Built into the life of every tree are stages of dormancy. In his book **As a Tree Grows**, W Phillip Keller points out that in northern climates the dormant phase is in the winter, and in the tropical regions it is during the hot, dry season. "It is important to understand," says Keller, that dormancy is not death. A tree may appear to be dead, it is true. The leaves of deciduous trees will be all stripped off in the fall, leaving a stark skeleton. The tree is nevertheless very much alive—but at rest." He added that this dormancy is immediately followed by a period of active growth. The dormant phase is a rebuilding and reconditioning for the upsurge of vigorous activity ahead.

Some Christians think that inactivity is a waste of time. They see the occasional lulls that come into life as being unproductive. But that is not necessarily the case. Notice what Christ did for His disciples after they had finished a strenuous period of evangelistic activity He led them into the wilderness to rest so they could be restored for further service. —D. C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Time in Christ's service  
Requires time out for renewal.

**RESTING ON THE BIBLE** - Resting on the Bible: — In Newport church, in the Isle of Wight, lies buried the Princess Elizabeth (daughter of Charles the First). A marble monument, erected by our Queen Victoria, records in a touching way the manner of her death. She languished in Carisbrook Castle during the wars of the Commonwealth — a prisoner, alone, and separated from all the companions of her youth, till death set her free. She was found dead one day, with her head leaning on her Bible, and the Bible open at the words,

**Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,  
and I will give you rest.**

The monument in Newport church records this fact. It consists of a female figure reclining her head on a marble book, with our text engraven on the book. Think, my brethren, what a sermon in stone that monument preaches. Think what a stunning memorial it affords of the utter inability of rank and high birth to confer certain happiness. Think what a testimony it bears to the lesson before you this day — the mighty lesson that there is no true rest for any one excepting in Christ. -Happy will it be for your soul if that lesson is never forgotten.

Here is an excerpt from the related **Wikipedia** article....

Following her death, her grave was largely unmarked until the 19th century, with the exception of her carved initials: E[lizabeth] S[uart]. Queen Victoria, who made her favourite home at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, commanded that a suitable monument be erected to her memory. In 1856, a white marble sculpture by Queen Victoria's favorite sculptor Carlo Marochetti was commissioned for her grave that depicted Elizabeth as a beautiful young woman, lying with her cheek on a Bible open to words from Gospel of Matthew: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Above the sculpture is a grating, indicating that she was a prisoner, but the bars are broken to show that the prisoner has now escaped to "a greater rest."

The plaque marking the sculpture reads: "To the memory of The Princess Elizabeth, daughter of King Charles I, who died at Carisbrooke Castle on September 8, 1630, and is interred beneath the chancel of this church, this monument is erected as a token of respect for her virtues and of sympathy for her misfortunes, by Victoria R., 1856." ([Princess Elizabeth of England](#))

### JESUS' REST GREATER THAN MOSES or JOSHUA

MOSES	JOSHUA	JESUS
<b>No Rest</b> Nu 14:33, 34+	<b>Rest from War</b> Dt 12:10+, Josh 23:1+	<b>Rest for soul</b> Mt 11:28-30+
Wandering Forty Years Nu 32:13+	Victory over Physical Enemies Josh 11:23+, Josh 12:1, 2+	Victory over Spiritual Enemies Ro 6:17,18+, He 2:14, 15+, Ga 6:14+
Wilderness Death Nu 14:35+	Promised Land Josh 5:6NIV+	Promised Life Col 3:4+

Matthew 11:29 **TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU AND LEARN FROM ME FOR I AM GENTLE AND HUMBLE IN HEART AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS: arate** (2PAAM) ton zugon mou eph humas kai **mathete** (2PPAAM) ap' hemou, hoti praus eimi (1SPA) kai tapeinos te kardia, kai heuresete (2PFAI) anapausin tais psuchais humon:

**Greek:** arate (2PAAM) ton zugon mou eph humas kai mathete (2PPAAM) ap' hemou, hoti praus eimi (1SPA) kai tapeinos te kardia, kai heuresete (2PFAI) anapausin tais psuchais humon;

**Amplified:** Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble (lowly) in heart, and

you will find rest (relief and ease and refreshment and recreation and blessed quiet) for your souls. [Jer. 6:16] ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" ([Matthew 11](#))

**ESV:** Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

**NLT:** Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Put on my yoke and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Take at once my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find cessation from labor and refreshment for your souls,

**Young's Literal:** take up my yoke upon you, and learn from me, because I am meek and humble in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls,

## “Take My yoke upon you

- **My yoke:** Mt 7:24, 17:5 Jn 13:17, 14:21-24, 15:10-14 1Co 9:21 2Co 10:5 1Th 4:2 2Th 1:8 Heb 5:9
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Come...Take...Learn** - Notice that there are three commands each calling for a choice to respond, to surrender to Jesus. Remember that surrender means to yield to the power, control, or possession of another, in this case the One Who is Himself Rest personified. We see a similar pattern in Romans 12:1, 2 where Paul calls for us to surrender our bodies to God as a living sacrifice, as a preparation for living out the Christian life as described in Romans 12-16.

*Bear not a single care thyself,  
One is too much for thee;  
The work is Mine, and Mine alone;  
Thy work—to rest in Me.*

(Chapter 1 Introduction in [Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret](#))

**Take** ([142](#))([airo](#)) literally describes lifting something up, taking up, raising, as taking up stones (Jn 8:59) or raising the anchor of a ship (Act 27:13). **Airo** can also mean to take up and place on oneself, to take up and bear or carry (compare Mt 4:6, Septuagint of Ps 91:12, my yoke - here in Mt 11:29, Lxx of Lam 3:27, a cross - figuratively in Mt16:24; literally in Mt 27:32). "We must come as disciples to learn, willing to be guided by His yoke - not merely to receive something." ([Guzik](#))

**Adam Clarke** writing on Jesus' command to **take His yoke** remarks that this is indeed a "Strange paradox! that a man already weary and overloaded must take a new weight upon him, in order to be eased and find rest! But this advice is similar to that saying, Ps 55:22. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee; i.e. trust thy soul and concerns to him, and he will carry both thyself and thy load.

**Jamieson** - Matchless paradox, even among the paradoxically couched maxims in which our Lord delights! That rest which the soul experiences when once safe under Christ's wing makes all yokes easy, all burdens light.

**Yoke** ([2218](#)) ([zugos/zygos](#) related to verb [zeúgnuni](#) = to join especially by a yoke, to bind) literally described a beam of balance that connected scales (see translation as scales or balances in Rev 6:5; Lev 19:36; Hos 12:7). Zugos was properly a wooden bar over the neck of a pair of animals joining them to pull together. Figuratively a connector which unites two to move or work as one.

Jesus uses this metaphor in Mt 11:29-30 because in that day a yoke was *never* for just *one*, but *always* joined *two* to work as one picturing *believers* living "*in the yoke with Jesus*," i.e. *with* Him and not just *for* Him!

**Gary Hill** adds that "Christians are not mere "work-horses" for Jesus! Through salvation, they live with Christ in His spousal yoke of love (see Rev 19:7-9). Christ our heavenly Bridegroom joins Himself intimately to us so we – as His bride – can do all things in tandem with Him (cf. 1 Jn 4:17 with Rev 19:7-9). Jesus never asks us to work for Him – only with Him . . . and He always does all the work! Jesus' yoke is always manageable . . . because He is always in it!" In Acts 15:10 to put a yoke on the neck is an ancient

idiom which means to restrict people which ironically stimulates over-doing (in another, misplaced area). Reflection: "Over-achieving for Christ" is as much a sin (missing the mark) as under-doing (compromising) – because both ending in God's disapproval (and much pain)! Eccl 7:16: "Do not be excessively righteous and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself?" In sum, Christ's yoke operates so we can live in faith ("His in-birthed persuasion"). This includes the Lord speaking His *rhēma* word in the heart in each scene of life (cf. Mt 11:29,30 with Ro 10:17). In this way, we bear eternal fruit as His partner (very Bride!) – living with Christ which is far more than merely living for Him . . . or doing God's will, our way! "*We must be willing, but the Lord does all the working; we prefer, but He performs!*" (G. Archer) (**CAVEAT**: BUT NOT "LET GO, LET GOD" BUT "LET GOD AND LET'S GO!"). ([The Discovery Bible](#))

Jesus' command to **take** His yoke is a call to submission of our will to His good and acceptable and perfect will. It is a call to surrender our rights and all that we are to Jesus (compare Ro 12:1+, Ro 12:2+ where Paul exhorts the saints to surrender themselves to God as living sacrifices). Just as the master would use the yoke to keep his oxen under control and to guide them to perform useful work, so too when we are yoked to Jesus, we are surrendering ourselves to His control and His guidance, so that He might lead us into the spiritual works that have been planned for us before the foundation of the world (see Eph 2:10+).

**John Walvoord** - In exhorting them to take His "yoke," Jesus was inviting them to discipleship. A pupil enrolling for instruction under a teacher is considered as coming under a "yoke." Instead of exchanging one burden for another, however, it is exchanging one which is onerous and crushing for one which is light and rewarding. There is an inner satisfaction and rest of soul in being a disciple of Christ which is unknown by the child of the world, who attempts to bear his own burden. ([Matthew Commentary - The Growing Opposition to Jesus](#))

**A W Pink** writes that...

the "yoke" is a figure of subjection. The force of this figure may be easily perceived if we contrast in our mind oxen running loose and wild in the field, and then harnessed to a plow where their owner directs their energies and employs them in his service. Hence we read that, "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth" (Lam. 3:27), which means that unless youths are disciplined, brought under subjection and taught to obey their superiors, they are likely to develop into sons of Belial—intractable rebels against God and man....

"Take My yoke upon you," by which Christ connoted: surrender yourself to My Lordship, submit to My rule, let My will become yours. As Matthew Henry rightly pointed out, "We are here invited to Christ as Prophet, Priest and King, to be saved, and in order to this, to be ruled and taught by Him." As the oxen are yoked in order to submit to their owner's will and to work under his control, so those who would receive rest of soul from Christ are here called upon to yield to Him as their King...

"Take My yoke upon you": it is to be carefully noted that this yoke is not laid upon us by another, but one which we are to place upon ourselves. It is a definite act on the part of one who is seeking rest from Christ and without which His rest cannot be obtained. It is a specific act of mind: an act of conscious surrender to His authority—henceforth to be ruled only by Him. Saul of Tarsus took this yoke upon him when, convicted of his rebellion (kicking against the pricks) and conquered by a sense of the Saviour's compassion, he said, "Lord, what would Thou have me to do?" To take Christ's yoke upon us signifies the setting aside of my own will and completely submitting to His sovereignty, the acknowledging of His Lordship in a practical way. Christ demands something more than lip service from His followers, even a loving obedience to all His commands, for He has declared, "Not everyone that says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that does the will of My Father Who is in Heaven" And again—"Whosoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock" (Matt. 7:21, 24). ([The Yoke of Christ - a pithy, even provocative discussion you might want to read](#))

**MacDonald** - Someone has suggested that if Jesus had had a sign outside His carpenter's shop, it would have read, "My yokes fit well." (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

*Oh for grace to be always coming to Jesus,  
and to be constantly inviting others to do the same!*

**C H Spurgeon Commentary** - "Take my yoke, and learn ": this is the second instruction; it brings with it a further rest which we "find. " The first rest he gives through his death; the second we find in copying his life. This is no correction of the former statement, but an addition thereto. First, we rest by faith in Jesus, and next we rest through obedience to him. Rest from fear is followed by rest from the turbulence of inward passion, and the drudgery of self. We are not only to bear a yoke, but his yoke; and we are not only to submit to it when it is laid upon us, but we are to take it upon us. We are to be workers, and take his yoke; and at the same time we are to be scholars, and learn from him as our Teacher. We are to learn of Christ and also to learn Christ. He is both teacher and lesson. His gentleness of heart fits him to teach, to be the illustration of his own teaching, and to work in us his

great design. If we can become as he is, we shall rest as he does. We shall not only rest from the guilt of sin — this he gives us; but we shall rest in the peace of holiness, which we find through obedience to him. It is the heart which makes or mars the rest of the man. Lord, make us “lowly in heart”, and we shall be restful of heart. “Take my yoke.” The yoke in which we draw with Christ must needs be a happy one; and the burden which we carry for him is a blessed one. We rest in the fullest sense when we serve, if Jesus is the Master. We are unloaded by bearing his burden; we are rested by running on his errands. “Come unto me”, is thus a divine prescription, curing our ills by the pardon of sin through our Lord’s sacrifice, and causing us the greatest peace by sanctifying us to his service.

Oh for grace to be always coming to Jesus, and to be constantly inviting others to do the same! Always free, yet always bearing his yoke; always having the rest once given, yet always finding more: this is the experience of those who come to Jesus always, and for everything. Blessed heritage; and it is ours!

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**Jesus’ yoke Matthew 11:28.** It is commonly thought that Jesus was talking here about the yoke that harnessed animals together when they were pulling a plough or a load. He was instead referring to a piece of wood that was fitted over one’s shoulders so that loads could be hung on it. The device was similar to the yoke used by the milkmaid of a bygone age when she was carrying two pails. The reference in Matthew 11 is to a porter. Often he was asked to carry loads impossible for a human being, but when he was given a yoke, the burden became much easier. Jesus does not say that he will take our burdens away but that he will give us the means of carrying them so that they are not too much for us. (Borrow [The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times](#): Gower, Ralph)

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### **Come to Me**

Come to Me, the Savior calls,  
To wearied hearts and burdened falls.  
Lay down the weight you cannot bear,  
For in My arms, My rest to share.

I see the tears, the pain, the strife,  
The endless toil of a troubled life.  
But here I stand with arms stretched wide,  
To offer peace no world can provide.

Take My yoke, it’s light and true,  
A gift of grace I give to you.  
Be My disciple, learn My way,  
Find My strength for every day.

I am gentle, humble in heart,  
And in My love, new life will start.  
Your soul will find its sweetest rest,  
For in My care, you’re truly blessed.

Oh weary one, do not delay,  
Come to Me, I Am the way.  
For My yoke is easy, My burden light,  
In Me, you’ll find eternal delight.

**and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,**

- **Learn from Me:** Mt 11:27, 28:20 Lk 6:46-48, 8:35, 10:39-42, Jn 13:15, Acts 3:22,23, 7:37, Eph 4:20,21 Php 2:5 1Jn 2:6
- **For I am gentle:** Mt 12:19,20 21:5 Nu 12:3, Ps 131:1 Isa 42:1-4 Zec 9:9 Lk 9:51-56 2Co 10:1 Php 2:7,8 1Pe 2:21-23

## **DISCIPLESHIP 101**

**Learn from Me** - Especially in combination with “yoke”, this is “shorthand” for **become My disciple**.

How so we learn from Jesus? First, you must take His Yoke. You must be born again (Jn 3:3+). A yoke is a wooden frame used to pair animals for work. Taking Jesus’ yoke means submitting to His guidance, walking

alongside Him, and sharing in His way of life, continually relying on His Spirit to give you the supernatural desire and power (Php 2:13NLT+) to live like Jesus lived (See [The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#)). Unlike the heavy burdens of the world or religious legalism, Jesus offers a yoke that is light and freeing because it is based on His grace, not based on our merit. We must learn from His character, which is gentle and humble in heart, emphasizing Spirit enabled qualities such as meekness, patience, and humility (cf Gal 5:22-23+). Learning from Jesus involves imitating Jesus in all areas of our life (1Cor 11:1+). Note the paradox ([Spiritual Paradox in the Christian Life](#)). While a yoke implies work, Jesus' yoke gives rest! Jesus promises rest—not just physical but spiritual—through learning His way ([Rest in the Bible](#)). This contrasts with striving and relying on our own natural strength, for He offers true inner peace through trust and obedience ([Trust and Obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey!](#) Sounds like a hymn doesn't it?) We learn from Him by reading the Word (the whole counsel of God, Old and New! cf Acts 20:27+), for He is the Word (Jn 1:1+, Rev 19:13+) We spend time in the Gospels, where His teachings, actions, and interactions demonstrate His character providing a Living Pattern to seek to imitate (cf Lk 10:39-41+). We meditate on His parables, enabled by His Spirit obey His commands, and imitate ([mimetes](#)) His gentleness and humility. In short, we allow the Spirit of Christ to live through us (Gal 2:20+), so that we are supernaturally enabled to live out His commandments to love God and love others (Mark 12:30-31+). We learn from Him by staying in constant communion with Him (abiding) in prayer for His wisdom, strength, and understanding (pray Col 1:9-14+ daily, not vain repetition but in full faith in 1Jn 5:14-15+ and then wait on the Lord to answer in His perfect way and perfect timing. We must continually ask His Spirit to guide us in imitating His character, demonstrating His humility shown by His willingness to serve (John 13:12-17+) and His heart to obey His Father (Jn 8:29+). Learning from Jesus means walking the path of selflessness and surrender (Philippians 2:3-8+), recognizing that taking His yoke is not about *direction* not about achieving *perfection*. (that's glorification!) We must daily present ourselves to Him as living, holy sacrifices (Ro 12:1, 2+), jettisoning self-reliance and rest fully on the assurance that His grace is sufficient and His power will be perfected in our weakness (2Cor 12:9-10+). Follow Him and He will give you the most rewarding job in eternity, making you fishers of men! (Mt 4:19+) Lord, give each of us the Spirit enabled desire and power to continually learn from our Master and to continually walk like He walked for Your glory and honor. Amen (See [The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#))

**Learn** (3129) (**manthano** related to the noun **mathetes** = disciple, literally a learner! The shut mind is the end of discipleship!) has the basic meaning of directing one's mind to something and producing an external effect. **Manthano** refers to teaching, learning, instructing, and discipling. **Manthano** means to genuinely understand and accept a teaching, to accept it as true and to apply it in one's life. It was sometimes used of acquiring a life-long habit.

**Richards** has an informative note on **manthano** and the related word **mathetes**...

In Greek culture prior to Socrates, **manthano** described the process by which a person sought theoretical knowledge. A **mathetes** was one who attached himself to another to gain some practical or theoretical knowledge, whether by instruction or by experience. The word came to be used both of apprentices who were learning a trade and of adherents of various philosophical schools. After the time of Socrates, the word lost favor with the philosophers, who were not at all happy with its association with labor.

But the concept of discipleship was most popular in the Judaism of Jesus' day. Rabbis had disciples who studied with them in a well-defined and special relationship. The need for training was intensely felt in the Jewish community, which believed that no one could understand Scripture without a teacher's guidance. A disciple in Judaism had to master--in addition to the Scriptures of the OT--the oral and written traditions that had grown up around the Scriptures. Only after being so taught might a person become a rabbi himself or teach with any authority. This notion is expressed in the Jews' amazed reaction to Jesus' public teaching: "How did this man get such learning without having studied?" (Jn 7:15). Jesus taught with authority without having gone through the only process that the Jews felt could qualify anyone to teach.

Several aspects of the rabbi-disciple relationship in first-century Judaism are significant. The disciple left his home and moved in with his teacher. He served the teacher in the most servile ways, treating him as an absolute authority. The disciple was expected not only to learn all that his rabbi knew but also to become like him in character and piety (Mt 10:24; Lk 6:40). The rabbi in return provided food and lodging and saw his own distinctive interpretations transmitted through his disciples to future generations. So when Mark says that Jesus chose twelve men "that they might be with him" (Mk 3:14), he accurately reflects contemporary understanding of how future leaders should be trained. (Borrow [Expository Dictionary of Bible Words](#))

**Charles Simeon** describes our duty in learning from Christ...

**With the teachableness of children**—[Children receive with the most implicit submission whatever their teachers tell them. Thus should we learn of Christ: we should not bring our own preconceived notions to the Scriptures, or presume to try the mysteries of revelation at the bar of our own corrupt reason; but we should believe whatever God has spoken, and receive it simply on the authority of the speaker. Nor should the opinions of the wisest philosopher be of any weight with us, if they be clearly contrary to the voice of inspiration. (Isa 8:20)

**With the diligence of students**—[They who have a thirst for knowledge, are almost constantly employed in deep thought, and laborious investigation. Nor do they account any pains too great, if only they can gain that eminence and distinction, which superior attainments will ensure. Thus should we be occupied in pursuit of divine knowledge; reading the word, “searching into it as for hidden treasures,” meditating upon it day and night, and praying over it for divine illumination. While others are careful, and cumbered about many things, we should be sitting at the feet of Jesus (Lk 10:39-42) and embracing all opportunities of religious instruction, whether in public or in private.]

**With the obedience of devoted followers**—[Earthly knowledge may be merely speculative: divine knowledge must be practical; it is of no use at all, any further than it purifies the heart and renews the life. Whatever we find to be the mind and will of God, that we must do without hesitation, and without reserve. As the reasonings of men are to be disregarded when opposed to the declarations of God, so are the maxims of men to be set at nought, when by adopting them we should violate a divine command. One single word, confirmed with THUS SAITH THE LORD, should operate more powerfully to the regulating of our faith and practice, than the sentiments and customs of the whole world combined.

**Gentle and humble** - These traits help us understand why His yoke is easy and his burden light, for He is not harsh nor filled with pride. He will not oppress us or given us a burden too great for us to carry. Jesus presented a striking contrast to His Jewish audience who were well acquainted with the Pharisees who were harsh and proud, the antithesis of Jesus! To be yoked with One who is gentle and humble is to also learn to take the lowest place.

#### Sweet Will of God

Leila Morris

Thy precious will, O conquering Saviour,  
Doth now embrace and compass me;  
All discords hushed, my peace a river,  
My soul a prisoned bird set free.

Sweet will of God still fold me closer,  
Till I am wholly lost in Thee.  
Sweet will of God still fold me closer,  
Till I am wholly lost in Thee

**Gentle (Meek)** (4239)(**praus** -- some sources state it originates from **paos** = easy, mild or soft) (**Click** study of related noun gentleness= **prautes**) describes those who are of a quiet, gentle spirit, in opposition to the proud and supercilious Scribes and Pharisees and their disciples. We have a compound word **gentleman**, which once fully expressed the meaning of the word meek, but in our modern society has almost wholly lost its original meaning.

**Barclay** - It was the lack of that very quality which ruined Alexander the Great, who, in a fit of uncontrolled temper in the middle of a drunken debauch, hurled a spear at his best friend and killed him. No man can lead others until he has mastered himself; no man can serve others until he has subjected himself; no man can be in control of others until he has learned to control himself. But the man who gives himself into the complete control of God will gain this meekness which will indeed enable him to inherit the earth. ([Matthew 11 Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** writes that "**Meekness** is the opposite of violence and vengeance. The **meek person**, for example, accepts joyfully the seizing of his property, knowing that he has infinitely better and more permanent possessions awaiting him in heaven (Heb. 10:34). The **meek person** has died to self, and he therefore does not worry about injury to himself, or about loss, insult, or abuse. The **meek person** does not defend himself, first of all because that is His Lord's command and example, and second because he knows that he does not deserve defending. Being poor in spirit and having mourned over his great sinfulness, the gentle person stands humbly before God, knowing he has nothing to commend himself. (MacArthur, J: [Matthew 1-7 Macarthur New Testament Commentary Chicago: Moody Press](#))

As noted above the Greeks characterized meekness as power under control and in the case of the Spirit filled believer this means that he or she is under the control of God's Spirit. From a practical standpoint, the individual who is "**praus**" exhibits a freedom from malice, bitterness, or any desire for revenge. The only way to truly define meekness is in the **context of relationships** because it refers to **how we treat others**. A **gentle spirit** should characterize our relationship with both man and God.

**Humble** (5011) (**tapeinos**) means **low, not high, not rising far from the ground**. It speaks of one's condition as lowly or of low degree. It described what was considered base, common, unfit, and having little value. It pictures one brought low, as for example by grief. **Tapeinos** is descriptive particularly of attitude and social positions.

**Wuest** writes that **tapeinos**... The word is found in an early secular document where it speaks of the Nile River in its low stage in the words, "It runs low." The word means "not rising far from the ground." It describes the Christian who follows in the humble and lowly steps of his Lord. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

**Larry Richards** has some excellent comments on **tapeinos** writing that...In Greek culture, **tapeinos** and its derivatives were words of contempt. The Greeks saw man as the measure of all things. Thus, to be low on the social scale, to know poverty, or to be socially powerless was seen as shameful. Only seldom in classical Greek do these words have a positive tone, commending an unassuming or obedient attitude. Scripture, however, sees the universe as measurable only against God. Compared to him, human beings are rightly viewed as humble. Thus in Scripture **tapeinos** and its derivatives are nearly always used in a positive sense (exceptions are in 2Co 10:1; Col 2:18+, Col 2:23+). **Tapeinos** represents a person's proper estimate of himself in relation to God and to others. In this sense, Jesus himself lived a humble life, depending completely on God and relating appropriately to all around him (Mt 11:29). It is the humble, Jesus says, whom God will exalt in his good time (Lk 14:11; 18:14). While the thought of the OT about humility infuses the NT, we learn more about humility in the Gospels and the Epistles. (Borrow [Expository Dictionary of Bible Words](#))

**Humble in heart** - Moses helps us understand this trait. He was described by God as "a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth." (Nu 12:3) What is Moses doing while Miriam and Aaron were criticizing him (Numbers 12:1-4)? Nothing. His first recorded words come in Nu 12:13 where he cries out, "O Lord, heal her!" It is at this point that we see Moses' greatness. Notice that Moses' mindset had certain effects (which can help us determine if we are meek)...

- He didn't fight back.
- He didn't answer his critics.
- He didn't get angry.
- He didn't seek revenge.
- He didn't argue or try to explain his actions.
- He didn't complain about his unfair treatment.
- Instead, he kept silent and let the Lord take up his cause.
- He only opened his mouth to pray for Miriam.

and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

- **You will find rest** Mt 11:28 Jer 6:16 Heb 4:3-11
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**EUREKA!**  
**I FOUND HIS REST!**

**You will find rest** - Think of this **rest** as God's great treasure for believers who lay hold of it by trusting in Jesus. **Find** is the Greek verb **heurisko** (see below) from which we get our English word "**Eureka!**" (Translated "**I have found it!**"), an exclamation attributed to Archimedes upon discovering a method for determining the purity of gold. Although we don't hear this word much today, in the past it was a triumphant cry of joy on discovering or finding something one greatly values! "**Eureka!**" should be the cry of every weary, heavy laden heart that has discovered the priceless **REST** found only in the Son of God. **Have you found His Rest?**

**HUDSON TAYLOR**  
**DISCOVERED**  
**THE SECRET!**

Hebrews 4 gives us a clue as to how to we can **find**" or discover Jesus' rest...

Therefore (see what he has just stated in Heb 3:18, 19+), let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His **rest** (**katapausis** = cessation of striving), any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us (euaggelizo - "*gospelled to us*"), just as they (Israel in the wilderness wanderings) also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter (present tense - pictures believers as in the process of entering) that **rest**, just as He has said, " AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY**REST**," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. (Hebrews 4:1, 2+, Heb 4:3+)

**R Kent Hughes makes an interesting distinction between belief and trust:** Leon Morris says that **faith** here in Hebrews 4:2 is "the attitude of trusting God wholeheartedly." So we must understand that the opening line of Hebrews 4:3, which says, "Now we who have believed enter that **rest**," specifically means, "we who have **wholeheartedly trusted** enter that **rest**." Thus, it is spelled out in no uncertain terms that faith that pleases God is belief plus trust. Belief, the mental acceptance of a fact as true, will simply not bring rest to any soul. Acknowledging that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior of the world will not give us rest. Trust in Him is what gives rest to our souls. "Trust brings rest," says Alexander Maclaren, "because it sweeps away, as the north wind does the banded clouds on the horizon, all the deepest causes of unrest." First, trust in Christ's sacrificial death begins our rest by giving us rest from the burden of guilt for our sins and a gnawing conscience. Second, trust in his character as an almighty God and a loving Savior gives us rest as we place our burdens on him. Just as a child sleeps so well in his parents' arms, so we rest in God.

### **THE PRINCIPLE IS SO SIMPLE: THE MORE TRUST, THE MORE REST.**

There is not a fretful soul in the world who is trusting. "The message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith" (Heb 4:2)—and so it is with us. Our **belief** or **unbelief** makes all the difference. Few have lived as stressful and frenetic a life as **J. Hudson Taylor**, founder of China Inland Mission. But **Taylor lived in God's rest**, as his son beautifully attests:

Day and night this was his secret, "just to roll the burden on the Lord." Frequently those who were wakeful in the little house at Chinkiang might hear, at two or three in the morning, the soft refrain of Mr. Taylor's favorite hymn [["Jesus, I am resting, resting in the joy of what Thou art" - sung by Steve Green](#)]. He had learned that for him, only one life was possible—just that blessed life of resting and rejoicing in the Lord under all circumstances, while He dealt with the difficulties, inward and outward, great and small. ("[Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret](#)" - [Online Book - Highly Recommended Read!](#)) (Ed: I would add that Hudson Taylor had learned to "Come", walking by faith, to Jesus in every circumstance - May we be imitators of men like Hudson Taylor who by faith and patience inherited the rest promised by our Redeemer. Amen. Hebrews 6:11, 12+)

Fellow-Christians, there is a **rest** for you. It is not beyond your capacity. You can have it if you wish....

The verb "**enter**" (in Heb 4:3) is in the **present tense**, which means that as believers we are in the process of entering. There is a **now** and **then** to our **rest**. **Now**, in Christ, we have entered and are entering our **rest**. Our experience of **rest** is proportionate to our trusting in Him. A wholehearted trust, for example, brings His **rest** into our souls in all its divine, cosmic and ideal dimensions. But there is also a **future rest** in Heaven—the repose of soul in God's **rest**, forever joyous, satisfied and working—"work that never becomes toil nor needs repose." (See [Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul](#)) (Bolding, italics and color added)

The following poem by **George Matheson** while not using the word "**rest**", I think does allude to how one enters the rest of the Savior...see if you agree...

Make me captive, Lord,  
And then I shall be free;  
Force me to render up my sword,  
And I shall conqueror be;  
I sink in life's alarms  
When by myself I stand;  
Imprison me within Thine arms,  
And strong shall be my hand.

My will is not my own  
Till Thou hast made it Thine;  
If it would reach the monarch's throne  
It must its crown resign;  
It only stands unbent,  
Amid the clashing strife,  
When on Thy bosom it has leaned,  
And found in Thee its life.

**Find** (2147) ([heurisko](#)) means to learn the location of something, either by intentional searching or by unexpected discovery. **Heurisko** can also mean to learn something previously not known, frequently involving an element of surprise. In the present context we can discover Jesus' rest by coming to Him, trusting Him to fulfill His promise to give rest to our souls. And when we do, we'll shout "Eureka!"

**Rest** (refreshment) ([372](#)) (**anapausis** from **anapauo** ~ refresh, give rest, permit one to cease from labor in order to recover and collect his strength <> **aná** = again + **paúo** = cease, give rest) describes rest or inner tranquility (inner rest) while performing necessary labor. An inward rest while laboring, thus **anapausis** is not primarily the cessation of work with the resultant rest, but the restoration of lost strength and inner rest experienced simultaneously in the work.

Figuratively **anapausis** refers to spiritual rest here in Mt 11.29 where the Lord promises **anapausis** while engaged in necessary labor, which is a paradox to the natural man. Supernatural "rest" when laboring is what Jesus promises. The focus seems to be upon restorative character of rest rather than mere cessation of activity. **MacDonald** in fact notes that Jesus' rest is "the rest that one experiences in the service of Christ when he stops trying to be great." (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

Compare - **anapausis** (372), rest with **anesis** (425), relief, relaxation.

**Rest** (Webster) - Cessation of motion or action of any kind, and applicable to any body or being; as rest from labor; rest from mental exertion; rest of body or mind. A body is at rest, when it ceases to move; the mind is at rest, when it ceases to be disturbed or agitated; the sea is never at rest. Hence,

Quiet; repose; a state free from motion or disturbance; a state of reconciliation to God; freedom from activity or labor; a state of motionlessness or inactivity; peace of mind or spirit; a rhythmic silence in music.

**TDNT** summarizes **anapausis** - a. "Cessation," "interruption"; b. "rest"; c. "place of rest"; d. "day of rest." Instead of the rest given by wisdom, Jesus offers true rest (b) with the gospel (Mt. 11:28-29). Without "cessation" (a) is the sense in Rev. 4:8, "place of rest" (c) in Mt. 12:43.

**Moulton and Milligan** record the secular example of "a septuagenarian (70 year old person who) pleads for "relief" (anapausis) from public duties and ...we read of the (rest) accorded to veterans...from military service....The essential idea is that of a respite, or temporary rest as a preparation for future toil....

**R Kent Hughes** comments on the "ideal" **rest** of God which is available to all believers noting that it "is **aworking rest**. God finished his great work and rested, but it was not a cessation from work, but rather the proper repose that comes from completing a great work. Jesus referred to his Father's ongoing work saying, "My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am working" (John 5:17). **God's repose is full of active toil God rests**, and in His **rest** He keeps working, even now. (See [Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul](#)) (Bolding added)

**J C Ryle** - Rest is a pleasant thing, and a thing that all seek after. The merchant, the banker, the tradesman, the soldier, the lawyer, the farmer—all look forward to the day when they shall be able to rest. But how few can find rest in this world! How many pass their lives in seeking it, and never seem able to reach it! It seems very near sometimes, and they imagine it will soon be their own. Some new personal calamity happens, and they are as far off rest as ever. The whole world is full of restlessness and disappointment, weariness and emptiness. The very faces of worldly men let out the secret; their countenances give evidence that the Bible is true; they find no rest....But Jesus offers rest to all who will come to Him. "Come unto Me," he says, "and I will give you rest." He will give it. He will not SELL it, as the Pharisee supposes—so much rest and peace in return for so many good works. He gives it freely to every coming sinner, without money and without price....He will give you rest from guilt of sin....He will give you rest from fear of law....He will give you rest from fear of hell....He will give you rest from fear of the devil....He will give you rest from fear of death....He will give you rest in the storm of affliction. He will comfort you with comfort the world knows nothing of. He will cheer your heart, and sustain your fainting spirit. He will enable you to bear loss patiently, and to hold your peace in the day of trouble. Oh! this is rest indeed. I know well, brethren, that believers do not enjoy so much rest as they might. I know well that they "bring a bad report of the land," and live below their privileges. It is their unbelief; it is their indwelling sin. There was a well near Hagar—but she never saw it.

There was safety for Peter on the water—but he did not look to Jesus, and was afraid. And just so it is with many believers: they give way to needless fear—are straitened in themselves. But still there is a real rest and peace in Christ for all who come to Him. The man that fled to the city of refuge was safe when once within the walls, though perhaps at first he hardly believed it; and so it is with the believer....Be advised, everyone of you who is now seeking rest in the world. Be advised, and come and seek rest in Christ. You have no home, no refuge, no hiding place, no portion. Sickness and death will soon be upon you—and you are unprepared. Be advised, and seek rest in Christ. There is enough in Him and to spare. Who has tried and did not find? A dying Welsh boy said, in broken English, "Jesus Christ is plenty for everybody." Know your privileges, all you who have come to Christ. You have something solid under foot and something firm under hand. You have a rest even now, and you shall have more abundantly...Let me speak to those who have come to Christ indeed. You are often cast down and disquieted within you. And why? Just because you do not abide in Christ and seek all rest and peace in Him. You wander from the fold: no wonder you return weary, footsore, and tired. Come again to the Lord Jesus and renew the covenant. Believe me, if you live to be as old as Methuselah, you will never get beyond this: a sinner saved by the grace of Christ. And think of the sinner's end. Rest in Christ—and so rest indeed! ([Come Unto Me](#))

**Wuest on REST** - Rest. This is the single translation of two Greek words which speak of rest from two different points of view. These must be distinguished if the Bible student is to arrive at a full-orbed and clear interpretation of the passages in which each appears. **Trench** has the following on these words: "Our Version renders both these words by 'rest'; anapausis at Mt 11:29, 12:43; and anesis at 2Cor. 2:13, 7:5; 2Thes. 1:7. No one can object to this; while yet, on a closer scrutiny, we perceive that they repose on different points of view. Anapausis from anapauo, implies the pause or cessation from labor (Rev. 4:8); it is the constant word in the Septuagint for the rest of the Sabbath; thus Ex. 16:23, 31:15, 35:2, and often. Anesis), from aniemi, implies the relaxing or letting down of chords or strings, which have before been strained or drawn tight, its exact and literal antithesis being epitasis (a stretching) ... thus Plato...'in the tightening (epitasis and slackening (anesis) of the strings!...' Plato has the same opposition between anesin and spoude (haste, speed); ... while Plutarch sets anesis over against stenochoria (narrowness of space, a confined space), as a dwelling at large, instead of in a narrow and straight room; and St. Paul over against thlipsis (a pressure, oppression, affliction) (2Cor. 8:13), not willing that there should be 'ease' (anesis) to other Churches, and 'affliction' (thlipsis), that is from an excessive contribution, to the Corinthian. Used figuratively, it expresses what we, employing the same image, call the relaxation of morals (thus Athenaeus, 14:13: akolasia (licentiousness, imtemperance, any excess or extravagance) kai (και) (and) anesis, setting it over against sophrosune (good sense, sobriety, prudence). "It will at once be perceived how excellently chosen echein anesin ("let him have liberty") at Acts 24:23 is, to express what St. Luke has in hand to record. Felix, taking now a more favorable view of Paul's case, commands the centurion who had him in charge, to relax the strictness of his imprisonment, to keep him rather under honorable arrest than in actual confinement; which partial relaxation of his bonds is exactly what this phrase implies...."**The distinction, then, is obvious. When our Lord promises anapausis to the weary and heavy laden who come to Him (Mt. 11:18, 29), His promise is, that they shall cease from their toils; shall no longer spend their labor for that which satisfieth not.** When St. Paul expresses his confidence that the Thessalonians, troubled now, should yet find anesia in the day of Christ (II Thes. 1:7), he anticipates for them, not so much cessation from labor, as relaxation of the chords of affliction, now so tightly drawn, strained and stretched to the uttermost. It is true that this promise and that at the heart are not two, but one; yet for all this they present the blessedness which Christ will impart to His own under different aspects, and by help of different images; and each word has its own fitness in the place where it is employed." The noun anapausis is found in Mt. 11:29, 12:43; Lk. 11:24; Rev. 4:8, 14:11. The verb anapauo, which is of the same root, and which means, "to cause or permit one to cease from any movement or labor in order to recover and collect his strength, to give rest, refresh, to give one's self rest, to take rest," occurs in Mt. 11:28, 26:45; Mk. 6:31, 14:41; Lk. 12:19; I Cor. 16:18; II Cor. 7:13; Philemon 1:7, 20; 1Pet. 4:14; Rev. 6:11, 14:13. There are illustrations of the use of these words in the papyri. Moulton and Milligan report the use of anapausis in the case of a man over 70 who pleads for "relief" (anapausis) from public duties; also in the case of veterans who have been released from military' service for a five years' rest. They say that the essential idea of this word is that of a respite or temporary rest as a preparation for future toil. They report the use of the verb anapauo as a technical term of agriculture where a farmer rests his land by sowing light crops upon it. The word **anesis** is found in Acts 24:23 (liberty); II Cor. 2:13, 7:5, 8:13; II Thes. 1:7. (Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader) ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

**John Newton** (Amazing Grace) notes that...

The Greek word expresses something more than rest, or a mere relaxation from toil; it denotes refreshment likewise. A person weary with long bearing a heavy burden, will need not only to have it removed—but likewise he needs food and refreshment, to restore his spirits, and to repair his wasted strength. Such is the rest of the Gospel. It not only puts an end to our fruitless labor—but it affords a sweet reviving cordial. There is not only peace—but joy in believing....

I have spoken something concerning the wearisome exercise of a conscience**burdened with guilt**: but by coming to Jesus and believing in him, an end is put to this. When we are enabled to view our sins as laid upon Christ, that those who come are accepted in the Beloved, that there is no more condemnation—but pardon,

reconciliation, and adoption, are the sure privileges of all who trust in Him—O the sweet calm that immediately takes place in the soul! It is something more than deliverance....

There is likewise a **rest from the power of sin**. In vain is this sought from resolutions and endeavors in our own strength. Even after we are spiritually awakened, and begin to understand the Gospel salvation, it is usually for a season rather a fight than a rest. But when we are brought nearer to Christ, and taught to live upon him as our sanctification, deriving all our strength and motives from him by faith, we obtain a comparative rest in this respect also. We find hard things become easy, and mountains sink into plains, by power displayed in our behalf...

There is a **rest from our own works**. The believer is quite **delivered from the law** as a covenant, and owes it no longer service in that view. His obedience is gracious, cheerful, the effect of love; and therefore he is freed from those fears and burdens which once disturbed him in the way of duty. At first there was a secret, though not allowed dependence on himself. When his frames were lively—he was strong, and thought he had something to trust to—but under a change (and changes will happen), he was at his wit's end. But there is a promised, and therefore an attainable rest in this respect; a liberty and power to repose on the finished Work and unchangeable Word of Christ; to follow him steadily through light and darkness; to glory in him not only when our frames are brightest; and to trust in him assuredly when we are at our lowest ebb. Such is the present rest; in different degrees according to the proportion of faith, and capable of increase even in those who have attained most, so long as we remain in this imperfect state. ([The Present and Future Rest of True Believers](#))

**F W Robertson** adds that the rest Jesus gives to our souls is **not a rest of inaction** "It is not the lake locked in ice that suggests repose, but the river moving on calmly and rapidly, in silent majesty and strength. It is not the cattle lying in the sun, but the eagle cleaving the air with fixed pinions, that gives you the idea of repose with strength and motion. In creation, the rest of God is exhibited as a sense of power which nothing wearies. When chaos burst into harmony, so to speak, God had rest.

**Spurgeon** adds that when you "Carry Christ's burden...your shoulders shall have rest. We do not mean sleep or idleness when we speak of *rest*: that is not rest, but *rust*."

**Vine** writes that **anapausis** means "cessation, refreshment, rest (ana = up + pauō = to make to cease), the constant word in the **Septuagint (Lxx)** for the Sabbath rest, is used in Mt 11:29; here the contrast seems to be to the burdens imposed by the Pharisees. Christ's rest is not a rest **from** work, but **in** work, "not the rest of inactivity but of the harmonious working of all the faculties and affections—of will, heart, imagination, conscience—because each has found in God the ideal sphere for its satisfaction and development" (J. Patrick, in Hastings' Bible Dictionary)

**Anapausis** - 5 times in the NT...

Matthew 11:29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and **YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS**."

Matthew 12:43+ "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking **rest**, and does not find it."

Luke 11:24+ "When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking **rest**, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'"

Revelation 4:8+ And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they **do not cease** to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

**Comment:** In this context anapausis means there is no cessation of activity in which one is engaged, which is the same sense in Revelation 14:11.

Revelation 14:11+ "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have **no rest** day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

**Comment:** Rev 4:8 and Rev 14:11 highlight a dramatic contrast of **ceaseless praise** in worship of the Almighty versus **ceaseless punishment** for worshippers of the Beast! The beast worshipers may have **rest** (of a sort) during the brief time of the end, but will have **no rest** throughout eternity future. The saints often experience duress during our brief time on earth, but thereafter will "**rest** (anapauo) **from their labors** (Greek = kopos = laborious toil which involves weariness and sorrow. Intense effort united with

trouble and toil.)" (Re 14:13+). Another contrast is seen in regard to the entity of rest - no rest in all eternity for those who reject Christ (Rev 14:11) and eternal rest (anapauo) for all who receive Christ (Rev 14:13). All men will be forever RESTLESS or RESTFUL (rest filled)! Dear reader, I pray you are in the latter camp! Amen.

**Anapausis** - 42v in the **Septuagint (LXX)** - Ge 8:9; 49:15; Ex 16:23; 23:12; 31:15; 35:2; Lev 16:31; 23:3, 24, 39; 25:4f, 8; Num 10:33; Ruth 1:9; 3:1; 1 Chr 22:9; 28:2; Esth 9:17; Ps 22:2; 114:7; 131:4, 8; Eccl 4:6; 6:5; 9:17; Job 7:18; 21:13; Mic 2:10; Isa 11:10; 14:3; 17:2; 23:12f; 25:10; 28:2; 32:17; 34:14; 37:28; 65:10; Jer 51:33; Lam 1:3. Here are some representative uses...

Genesis 8:9 but the dove found no **resting** (Heb = manoach = condition of rest; Lxx = anapausis) place for the sole of her foot, so she returned to him into the ark, for the water was on the surface of all the earth. Then he put out his hand and took her, and brought her into the ark to himself.

Exodus 16:23 (cp similar uses of anapausis in Ex 31:15, 35:2, Lv 16:31, 23:3, ) then he said to them, "This is what the LORD meant: Tomorrow is a Sabbath (Lxx = sabbaton) observance, a holy **Sabbath** (Lxx = anapausis) to the LORD. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning."

Exodus 23:12 "Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall **cease** (Heb = shabath = cease, desist; Lxx = anapausis) *from labor* so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may refresh (Lxx = anapsucho = to recover breath) themselves.

Leviticus 23:39 'On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD for seven days, with a **rest** (Heb = shabathon = time of rest; Lxx = anapausis) on the first day and a **rest** (Heb = shabathon = time of rest; Lxx = anapausis) on the eighth day.

Ruth 1:9+ "May the LORD grant that you may find **rest** (Heb = menuchah = resting place of peace and quiet; Lxx = anapausis), each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

Ruth 3:1+ Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek **security** (ESV = rest) (Heb = manoach = resting place of peace and quiet; Lxx = anapausis) for you, that it may be well with you?"

Psalms 23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside **quiet** (Heb = menuchah = resting place of peace and quiet; Lxx = anapausis) waters (Hebrew = "waters of rests")

**Spurgeon on quiet or still waters** - What are these "still waters" but the influences and graces of his blessed Spirit? His Spirit attends us in various operations, like waters -- in the plural -- to cleanse, to refresh, to fertilise, to cherish. They are "still waters", for the Holy Ghost loves peace, and sounds no trumpet of ostentation in his operations. He may flow into our soul, but not into our neighbour's, and therefore our neighbour may not perceive the divine presence; and though the blessed Spirit may be pouring his floods into one heart, yet he that sitteth next to the favoured one may know nothing of it.

"In sacred silence of the mind My heaven, and there my God I find."

Still waters run deep. Nothing more noisy than an empty drum. That silence is golden indeed in which the Holy Spirit meets with the souls of his saints. Not to raging waves of strife, but to peaceful streams of holy love does the Spirit of God conduct the chosen sheep. He is a dove, not an eagle; the dew, not the hurricane. Our Lord leads us beside these "still waters;" we could not go there of ourselves, we need his guidance, therefore it is said, "he leads me." He does not drive us. Moses drives us by the law, but Jesus leads us by his example, and the gentle drawing of his love.

Psalms 132:8 **Arise** (command) O LORD, to Your **resting** (Heb = menuchah = resting place of peace and quiet; Lxx = anapausis) place, You and the ark of Your strength.

Ecclesiastes 4:6 One hand full of **rest** (nachath = quietness; Lxx = anapausis) is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.

**Trench** discusses the relationship between **anapausis** and **anesis**...

**Anapausis** from **anapauo** implies the pause or cessation from labor (Rev4:8); it is the constant word in the Septuagint for the rest of the Sabbath; thus Ex16:23, 31:15, 35:2, and often.

**Anesis**, from **aniemi** (**aniema** = to loosen, relax), implies the relaxing or letting down of chords or strings,

which have before been strained or drawn tight, its exact and literal antithesis being epitasis (a stretching)... thus Plato... 'in the tightening (epitasis) and slackening (anesis) of the strings!...' Plato has the same opposition between anesis and spoude (haste, speed);... while Plutarch sets anesis over against stenochoria (narrowness of space, a confined space), as a dwelling at large, instead of in a narrow and straight room; and Paul over against thlipsis (a pressure, oppression, affliction) (2Co 8:13), not willing that there should be 'ease' (anesis) to other Churches, and 'affliction' (thlipsis), that is from an excessive contribution, to the Corinthian.

Used figuratively, anesis expresses what we, employing the same image, call the relaxation of morals (thus Athenaeus, 14:13: akolasia (licentiousness, intemperance, any excess or extravagance) kai anesis setting it over against sophrosune (good sense, sobriety, prudence).

## ANAPAUSIS IN MATTHEW 11:28-30

(Trench goes on to say) The distinction, then, is obvious. When our Lord promises anapausis the weary and heavy laden who come to Him (Mt. 11:28, 29),

His promise is, that they shall cease from their toils; shall no longer spend their labor for that which satisfies not. (Ed: The corollary is that when you come to the Rest Jesus provides, you come to experience the purpose for which you were created and your "work" for Him and in Him is satisfying and of eternal value [see Jn 15:16 "your fruit should remain"].)

When Paul expresses his confidence that the Thessalonians, troubled now, should yet find anesis (relief as a cessation from some trouble or difficulty, relaxation) in the day of Christ (2Th 1:7 uses anesis), he anticipates for them, not so much cessation from labour, as relaxation of the chords of affliction, now so tightly drawn, strained and stretched to the uttermost. It is true that this promise and that at the heart are not two, but one; yet for all this they present the blessedness which Christ will impart to his own under different aspects, and by help of different images; and each word has its own fitness in the place where it is employed. ([Trench, R. C. - Synonyms of the New Testament - online](#))

**Anapausis** describes an inward rest while laboring, whereas **anesis** indicates a relaxation brought about by a source other than oneself.

**Rest for you souls** is a quotation from **Jeremiah**...

Thus says the Lord, "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find **rest for your souls**. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.' (Jer 6:16).

**Comment:** The same dynamic occurs today - if we refuse to come to Jesus, to take His yoke and to learn from Him, then we too will not experience the good way in which our soul finds His promised rest!

**John MacArthur** notes that the English dictionary has several definitions that are wonderful parallels for the spiritual rest that Jesus gives as we trust in Him...

**First**, the dictionary describes rest as cessation from action, motion, labor, or exertion. In a similar way, to enter God's rest is to cease from all efforts at self-help in trying to earn salvation.

**Comment:** As you read these definitions of rest understand that they apply not only to our initial salvation experience by grace through faith, but to our daily walk by the Spirit, a walk that is also by grace through faith. Too many followers of Christ think that now that they are justified, they can now rely on their self efforts to live the Christian life. Nothing could be further from the truth and undoubtedly accounts for many saints ceasing to diligently work out their salvation -- they have become weary and exhausted because they have trusted in self not Savior nor His Spirit. In short, self reliance is a major gospel enemy. A supernatural life (which is by definition what the Christian life is to be) requires a supernatural Source of power, and that power is found only in the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

**Second**, rest is described as freedom from that which wearies or disturbs. Again we see the spiritual parallel of God's giving His children freedom from the cares and burdens that rob them of peace and joy.

**Third**, the dictionary defines rest as something that is fixed and settled. Similarly, to be in God's rest is to have the wonderful assurance that our eternal destiny is secure in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. It is to be freed from the uncertainties of running from philosophy to philosophy, from religion to religion, from guru to guru, hoping somehow and somewhere to discover truth, peace, happiness, and eternal life.

**Fourth**, rest is defined as being confident and trustful. When we enter God's rest we are given the assurance that "He who began a good work in [us] will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

**Finally**, the dictionary describes rest as leaning, reposing, or depending on. As children of God, we can depend with utter certainty that our heavenly Father will "supply all [our] needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

**Souls** (5590)(**psuche** or **psyche** from **psucho** = to breathe, blow, English = psychology, "study of the soul") is the breath, then that which breathes, the individual, animated creature. However the discerning reader must understand that psuche is one of those Greek words that can have several meanings, the exact nuance being determined by the context. It follows that one cannot simply select of the three main meanings of psuche and insert it in a given passage for it may not be appropriate to the given context. The meaning of **psuche** is also contingent upon whether one is a dichotomist or trichotomist. Consult Greek lexicons for more lengthy definitions of psuche as this definition is only a brief overview. (Click an excellent article on [Soul](#) in the Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology; see also ISBE article on [Soul](#))

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**AS SMART AS AN OX!** - On one occasion F B. Meyer visited D. L. Moody in Northfield, Massachusetts. Moody, showing Meyer a team of oxen, said that whenever one of those oxen was being yoked in, the other, which might be on the far side of the farmyard, would come trotting up and stand beside the other one until it was yoked in also.

Meyer then made this encouraging application to us in our relationship to Christ: "Jesus stands today with the yoke upon His shoulder. He calls to each one and says, 'Come and share My yoke, and let us plow together the long furrow of your life. I will be a true yokefellow to you. The burden shall be on Me.

When our burden seems heavy and our loads hard to bear, Christ has promised to lift our burdens and lighten our cares. That's how we find rest and peace in every area of life. —Richard W De Haan

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**WALKING WITH THE GUIDE** - As Sarah Smiley was preparing to descend a 5,000 foot Rigi Mountain peak in central Switzerland, her guide told her that she should let him carry her load. She agreed to give some of it to him, but she kept a few items. As they made their way down the mountainside, Sarah felt hindered by her load. Soon she had to stop and rest. When she did, her guide demanded that she give him everything except her Alpine walking stick. This time she agreed and transferred the load to his strong shoulders. Without the extra weight, she made the rest of the trip with ease. It was as if her Lord was trying to say to her, "O foolish, willful heart, have you indeed given up your last burden? You have no need to carry them, or even the right."

How often we are just like Sarah Smiley! When we face a difficulty, we carry the burden by ourselves. God invites us to cast all of our cares on Him, and He is strong enough to shoulder the burden. Let's take Him up on the offer. Our pathway will be easier and our steps lighter. —P. R. Van Gorder

Our work is to cast care.  
God's work is to take care.

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**COME APART AND REST OR YOU'LL COME APART** - Greek legend tells us that in ancient Athens a man noticed the great storyteller Aesop playing childish games with some little boys. The observer laughed and jeered at Aesop for this undignified behavior. Instead of replying, Aesop picked up a bow that he sometimes used for playing a stringed instrument. He unstrung it and laid it on the ground. Then he said to the critical Athenian, "Now, answer the riddle, if you can, and tell us what the unstrained bow implies." The man could not tell him. He had no idea what it meant. Aesop explained, "If you keep a bow always bent, it will break eventually; but if you let it go slack, it will be more fit for use when you want it."

Its like that with people too. That's why we need to take time to rest—when the bow of life can be relaxed. God "rested from all His work" (Gen. 2:3). Shouldn't we follow His example? You can't do your best for the Lord if you don't rest a while. —P R. Van Gorder

**Matthew 11:30 FOR MY YOKE IS EASY AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT: ho gar zugos mou chrestos kai to phortion mou elaphron estin (3SPA1):**

**Greek:** ho gar zugos mou chrestos kai to phortion mou elaphron estin. (3SPA1)

**Amplified:** For My yoke is wholesome (useful, good—not harsh, hard, sharp, or pressing, but comfortable, gracious, and pleasant), and My burden is light and easy to be borne. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." ([Matthew 11](#))

**ESV:** For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

**NLT:** For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** for my yoke is mild and pleasant, and my load is light in weight.

**Young's Literal:** for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

- **Yoke:** Pr 3:17 Micah 6:8 Acts 15:10,28 Gal 5:1,18 1Jn 5:3
- **Burden :** Jn 16:33 2Co 1:4,5 4:17 12:9,10 Php 4:13
- [Matthew 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### 'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus

[Midi with all lyrics](#)

[Sung by Casting Crowns](#)

[Sung by Alan Jackson](#)

Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus,  
Just from sin and self to cease;  
Just from Jesus simply taking  
Life and **REST** and joy and peace.

— Stead

**For (gar)** is a **term of explanation** and should always prompt a response, an interaction with the living and active Word of God. Too often we read the text passively and miss the joy and exhilaration of interacting with God's Word, which is the Father's love letter to us, a letter meant not so much to make us more "**educated**" but to draw us to Himself and make us more **intimate** with Him. As C H Spurgeon once said "*If you wish to know God you must know his Word.*" Dear student of God's Holy Word, let me encourage you to make great use of these opportunities to pause, reflect and in essence learn the blessed practice of **meditating** on the Scriptures as you **interrogate** words like "**for**" (there are over 7000 "**for**'s" in the Scripture providing abundant "opportunity" for interaction, practice, edification and blessing - see Ps 1:1+, Ps 1:2+, Ps 1:3+, cp Joshua 1:8+) asking simple questions like "What is the **for** there for?", "Why is it here?". etc. The more you practice the art of asking the Scripture questions, the more you will find yourself experiencing the joy of self discovery, as your Teacher the Spirit interacts with you and illuminates the passage. Then, when you read the commentary (including the one you are reading now), you can be a good Berean (Acts 17:11+) and discern truth from error (cp Hebrews 5:14+). A shrinking of your study time of the Holy Word may result in "shrinking power" from Holy Spirit in your life for He uses the Word to sanctify you by grace through faith! The church needs more men like **John Wesley**, the powerful eighteenth-century preacher who wrote...

I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit, coming from God, and returning to God; just hovering over the great gulf; a few months hence I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing—the way to heaven ... God Himself has condescended to teach the way. He hath written it down in a book.

*O give me that Book!*

*At any price, give me the book of God.*

(May Wesley's tribe increase Lord. Amen!)

**My yoke is easy and My load is light** - What a striking contrast between Jesus and the oppressive Pharisees (See Mt 23:4).

**William MacDonald's** - Jesus' yoke is easy; it does not chafe. Someone has suggested that if Jesus had had a sign outside His carpenter's shop, it would have read, "My yokes fit well." (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Yoke** (pair of scales) ([2218](#)) (**zugos/zygos** related to verb **zeúgnuni** = to join especially by a yoke, to bind) literally described a beam of balance that connected scales (see translation as *scales* or *balances* in Rev 6:5; Lev 19:36; Hos 12:7).

**BDAG** and **Liddell-Scott** summary of **zugos/zygos**...

(1) Anything which joins two bodies; and so, the yoke or cross-bar tied by the yoke-band to the end of the pole, and having collars or loops at each end, by which two horses, mules or oxen drew the plough or carriage, Homer, etc.:—metaphorically, the yoke of slavery (as mentioned in the Greek classics like Herodotus, etc) A frame used to control working animals or, in the case of humans, to expedite the bearing of burdens.

Yoke in our literature only figuratively of any burden.

Zugos was the name of the cross-bar joining the horns of the lyre, along which the strings were fastened.

Zugos in plural described the thwarts (structural crosspiece forming a seat for a rower in a boat) joining the opposite sides of a ship or boat, the benches.

Zugos was used for the middle of the three banks in a trireme (an ancient galley having three banks of oars).

Zugos described a a rank (a single line of soldiers or police officers drawn up abreast) or line of soldiers, opposite to a file (a row of soldiers arranged one behind the other)

(2) An instrument for determining weight = a scale, the beam of balance, the balance itself. (Rev 6:5)

What is the yoke in context of Mt 11:29? Is it not His teaching, His teaching which is calculated to make disciples? As discussed in the notes on the previous passage, to "**take a yoke**" in Jesus' day meant to become a disciple. When we submit ourselves voluntarily and willingly and wholly to Jesus Christ, we are yoked to Him. And this is a "forever" yoking! Hallelujah!

**Zugos/zygos** - 6x in 6v in the **NAS** - pair of scales(1), yoke(5).

Matthew 11:29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

Matthew 11:30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Acts 15:10 See notes below

Galatians 5:1 See notes below

1 Timothy 6:1 All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against.

Revelation 6:5 When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.

**Zugos/zygos** - 46v in the non-apocryphal Septuagint - Gen 27:40; Lev 19:35; 26:13 (" I broke the bars of your **yoke** and made you walk erect"); Num 19:2; Deut 21:3; 2Chr 10:4, ("Your father made our yoke hard") 2 Chr 10:9ff ('Lighten the yoke which your father put on us'), 2Chr 10:14; Job 6:2; 31:6; 39:10; Ps 2:3; 62:9; Pr 11:1 ("A false **balance** is an abomination to the LORD"); Pr 16:11; 20:23; Isa 5:18; 9:4; 10:27; 14:5, 25, 29; 40:12, 15; 46:6; 47:6; Jer 2:20 ("For long ago I broke your **yoke** And tore off your bonds; But you said, 'I will not serve!'); Jer 5:5; 27:8, 11; 28:2, 4, 11, 14; 30:8; 32:10; Lam 3:27; Ezek 5:1; 34:27; 45:10; Dan 5:27; 8:25; Hos 12:7; Amos 8:5; Mic 6:11; Zeph 3:9;

**David Lowery** on **yoke** -A yoke was "a frame used to control working animals" (BDAG 429; BAGD, 339). It serves to clarify Jesus' meaning of "rest" (Mt 11:28-29). It is not the absence of labor but meaningful duty in following Jesus (cf. Mt 10:38-39) and the assurance of God's presence and provision for the task (cf. Mt 10:19-20; 28:20). ([Bible Knowledge Key Word Study](#))

**My yoke** - Not the yoke of the legalists of Jesus day, but His yoke of grace. Jesus' yoke is diametrically different from the yoke that men cruelly place upon other men! His grace laden yoke brings liberty, releasing the captive and setting free the downtrodden (Lk 4:18, 19). The legalistic yoke of men brings bondage, which steals the joy of our salvation (cp Neh 8:10, Ps 51:12, Ps 51:14+).

**THOUGHT** - Every morning, we need to arise and make the prayerful choice to take up and put on Jesus' light, easy, grace-filled yoke and experience His liberating joy and peace throughout the day as His Spirit enables us to live as those who know the truth and are free indeed (Ps 95:1+, Ps 118:15+, Isaiah 12:3+, Jn 8:31, 32, 36+)

Here are passages that speak of the placing of men's **yokes** upon other men...

**Acts 15:10+** (Peter speaks boldly Acts 15:7 [a clear sign he is filled with/controlled by the Spirit - cp Acts 4:8, Eph 5:18+, notice the first "indicator" of being Spirit filled - Eph 5:19+ - He controls our tongue!]) "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the **disciples** (specifically the Gentiles - notice what believers are called most often in Acts! Disciples [see study of the word Mathetes]! Why have we veered away from this pattern presented by the early church? Do we think Jesus' requirements for a genuine disciple are too burdensome?! See 1Jn 5:3) a **yoke** which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? (Answer? Only Jesus could bear the yoke of the law [Mt 5:17+, cp the Messianic Ps 42:6,7,8], a burden He willingly bore for all who would believe on Him.)

**Galatians 5:1+** It was for freedom (eleutheria - not the *right* to do as you please but the *power* to do as you should!) that Christ set us free (eleutheroo); therefore **keep standing firm** (**present imperative** - Make this your daily practice. Remember though...don't try to do it alone, but each and every morning make a conscious, volitional surrender to the Spirit of Christ, Who will be your continual Encourager and Enabler throughout the day!) and **do not be subject** again (**present imperative** with the negative particle = **Stop** allowing yourselves to be entangled by the cords of legalism, including subtle lists [whether on paper or in your mind] of "do's and don'ts") to a **yoke of slavery** (bondage to the law, to works "righteousness", to trying to gain God's approval by being good [Only God is good enough! Lk 18:19], by performing "**good deeds**" [You can't without reliance on the Spirit! cp 2Cor 3:5,6+, Jn 6:63]). **Galatians 5:2 Behold** (**ide** = imperative of **eido** = to know by perception, by sight) I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision (or try to keep your list of do's and don'ts, etc), Christ will be of no benefit to you.

+++

**Easy** (5543) (**chrestos** from **chraomai** = furnish what is needed) conveys the basic meaning of being well adapted to fulfill a purpose and thus describes that which is useful, suitable, excellent, serviceable. The idea is goodness combined with a nuance of 'serviceableness.' (as in Luke 5:39 where the old wine is "good enough" - fine for use). **Chrestos** refers to that which is fit for use, able to be used and hence is good, kind, benevolent, worthy, useful, virtuous, and pleasant (in contrast to what is hard, harsh, bad or unprofitable). **Chrestos** expresses the material usefulness of things with regard to their goodness, pleasantness and softness.

**THOUGHT** - And so we see that Jesus' **yoke** is **chrestos**, well-fitting and tailor-made for each believer and their every need. Christ's **yoke** furnishes what is useful, easy to bear, having nothing galling or harsh, but, to the contrary, it provides us all that we need, what we really need! Do you truly believe that statement? Do you believe that Jesus is enough? ...That His grace is sufficient for all of your needs, your weaknesses [2Cor 12:9+] ...enough for your victory over the besetting sin that so easily entangles you, impeding your walk of faith [Heb 12:1+]? Then fix your eyes upon Jesus [Heb 12:2+], take up His easy yoke, and walk forth in confidence and conviction that He has already won the battle for you dear saint! (See this principle throughout Scripture - 1Sa 2:9, 17:47, 2Chr 20:15, 17, 32:8, Ps 46:11, Zech 4:6, Dt 20:1, 4, Josh 10:42 - see below for Charles Haddon Spurgeon's exhortation and Martin Luther's encouraging hymn)

**Spurgeon** - Unless the Spirit of God (Spirit of Christ, our "Fellow Yoke Bearer" Ro 8:9+) be upon us, we have no might from within and no means from without to rely upon. Wait upon the Lord, beloved (Isa 40:31+), and seek strength from Him alone. There cannot come out of you what has not been put into you. You must receive and then give out.

### A Mighty Fortress

Martin Luther

Did we in our own strength confide,  
Our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side,  
The Man of God's own choosing;  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth, His name,  
From age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.

[A Mighty Fortress by Steve Green](#)

**Adam Clarke** comments on "**My yoke is easy**"...

My Gospel imposes nothing that is difficult; on the contrary, it provides for the complete removal of all that which oppresses and renders man miserable, viz. sin. The commandments of Christ are not grievous. Hear the whole: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself. (Mk 12:29, 30) Can any thing be more congenial to the nature of man than love? Such a love as is inspired by God (and empowered by God-Ro 5:5+, Gal 5:22+), and in which the soul rests supremely satisfied and infinitely happy? Taste, and know, by experience, how good the Lord is (Ps 34:8+), and how worthy His yoke is to be taken, borne, and loved. This most tender invitation of the compassionate Jesus is sufficient to inspire the most **DIFFIDENT** (doubting of another's power, disposition, sincerity or intention!) soul with **CONFIDENCE** (A trusting or reliance. An assurance of mind or firm belief in the integrity, stability or veracity of Jesus and His precious Word promising His personal presence and power!)

Clarke's comments beg the question dear child of the Living God...are you...

**DIFFIDENT  
OR  
CONFIDENT?**

**Burden** (cargo, load) (5413) (**phortion** from **phortos** = something carried, used of the freight of a ship Acts 27:10) is literally that which is carried. It is an old word used for a ship's cargo (Acts 27:10). A load or burden.

**Liddell Scott** says a secular use of phortion was of a child in a womb (Xenophon). **Phortion** is the pack a soldier is expected to carry.

**Phortion** is used figuratively in a positive sense to describe the commands of Christ (three commands here in Mt 11:30 = **come...take...learn**), but in a negative sense to describe the ceremonial observances of human traditions and stipulations (Mt 23:4, Lk 11:46).

**Phortion** can also describe the burden of one's own responsibilities and failures (Gal 6:5).

**Baker's Evangelical Dictionary** - In the New Testament phortion [ φορτίον ], the Greek word used for burden, denotes the troubles of this life. In Matthew 23:4 Jesus describes the heavy burdens the Pharisees laid upon the people "but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them." Obviously this is a burden of legalism. This same Greek word is used to describe a man's load of imperfections and sins in Galatians 6:5. Jesus uses the same word to describe his burden in Matthew 11:30: "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." The reason for having a light burden is described in the previous verse: "I am gentle and humble in heart." Burdens will come in this life but they will be light if we have Jesus' approach to life. ([Burden - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#))

**TDNT** - 1. This word has such senses as "freight," "lading," "burden," "goods," and a child in the womb. "Burdening" with cares, sickness, etc. is another sense. 2. The OT equivalent šd has such senses as "bearing," "burden," "tribute," "toll," or "trouble." 3. The LXX uses phortion for "burden" (Is. 46:1), "burden of sin" (Ps. 38:4), the "burden" one person is for another (Job 7:20), and "load" (of wood) (Jdg. 9:48-49). 4. The rabbis use the Hebrew in various ways for "bearing," "business," "occupation," "burden," "obligation," or "duty."

**Burden** (Webster) = something that is carried (a load); That which is borne with labor or difficulty; that which is grievous, wearisome, worrisome or oppressive. Something that is exacting, oppressive, or difficult to bear: the burden of responsibility. A cause of hardship, worry, or grief.

**Load** (Webster) = something that weighs down the mind or spirits (took a load off her mind) b : a burdensome or laborious responsibility. Any heavy burden; a large quantity borne or sustained. A tree may be said to have a load of fruit upon it.. That which is borne with pain or difficulty; a grievous weight; encumbrance.

**John MacArthur** - Baros in Gal 6:2 is a strong word, which means "a heavy weight"; whereas phortion in Gal 6:5 refers to anything that is easily carried. It was often used of the general obligations of life that a person is responsible to bear on his own. One of those obligations is to help others with their crushing burdens, a kindness that will reap eternal rewards. (The Master's plan for the church).

**W E Vine** - Phortion which, with the exception of Acts 27:10, is used only in a metaphorical sense in the New Testament; of discipleship, whether of the scribes, Pharisees, and lawyers, Matthew 23:4; Luke 11:46, or of the Lord Jesus, Matthew 11:30. The difference between **baros**, Gal 6:2, and phortion is that **phortion**, as its derivation from phero, "to carry," shows, is something borne; be the load light or heavy, its weight is not the point. With baros, on the other hand, weight is the essential thing. Thus **phortion** is used in Matthew 11:30, "My burden is light," where baros would be unsuitable. The burden of the transgressor is of necessity a heavy one, hence baros appears in Gal 6:2; but the burdens that all must bear are some lighter, some heavier, the point is that, heavy or light, each must bear his own; hence in Gal 6:5 phortion is used. (Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson)

**Wuest** - The word burden in Gal 6:2 is **baros**, and in this verse, **phortion**. While these words have their distinctive meaning in the secular usage of the early centuries, and while synonyms in juxtaposition should usually be carefully distinguished, yet we cannot draw a fine distinction between these two words in this passage. There is no use burdening the English reader with the various meanings of the two words, since they would have no bearing upon our study. In Gal 6:2 the apostle exhorts the Galatian saints to bear the burdens of their fellow saints, namely, to assume the responsibility of giving that saint spiritual aid in case he has allowed sin to come into his experience. Here he exhorts the saints to bear their own burdens. This is doubtless an intentional paradoxical antithesis on the part of the apostle. It is the Christian who knows that he has a burden of his own, namely, a susceptibility to certain

sins, and who has fallen himself, who is willing to bear his neighbor's burden. Again, when each man's self-examination reveals infirmities of his own, even though they may not be the same as those of his neighbors, he will not claim moral and spiritual superiority to others. Furthermore, each saint should bear his own burden in the sense that he must recognize his personal responsibilities towards God and man. He is responsible for the kind of life he lives. Again, when he sees his own failings, he will have no inclination to compare himself with others. The word own is from *idios*, which means "pertaining to one's self, one's own as compared to that which is another's." It speaks of personal, private, unique possession. (Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament)

**Phortion** - 6x in 5v. NAS = burden(1), burdens(3), cargo(1), load(1).

Matthew 11:30 "For My yoke is easy and My **burden** is light."

Matthew 23:4 "They tie up heavy **burdens** and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.

Luke 11:46 But He said, "Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with **burdens** hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the **burdens** with one of your fingers.

Acts 27:10 and said to them, "Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be with damage and great loss, not only of the **cargo** and the ship, but also of our lives."

Galatians 6:5 For each one will bear his own **load**.

**Phortion** - in the non-apocryphal **Septuagint (Lxx)**- 2Sa 19:35; Job 7:20; Ps 38:4; Isa 46:1. For example **David** records...

Psalms 38:4 For my iniquities are gone over my head; As a heavy **burden** (Hebrew = *massa*; Lxx = phortion) they weigh too much for me.

**Comment:** Indeed Jesus says to all with the unbearable "heavy burden" of iniquity to "Come to Me". (Jesus bore the "burden" of our iniquity - Isaiah 53:4).

Jesus contrasts "**heavy-laden**", burdened (phortizo) men with His **light burden** (phortion). Did you notice the seemingly paradoxical call of Jesus to an already weary and burdened man or woman to take on a new load, and that in order that they might receive rest! Only Jesus can orchestrate such a supernatural feat. Praise His Holy Name!

The **burden** of doing His will is not a heavy one as John explains "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome (oppressive, worrisome). (1Jn 5:3).

Beloved, is not Jesus' call to come similar to Jehovah's call to cast our burden in Psalm 55:22. May we all be quick to humble ourselves and willingly cast our burden on Jehovah. What are the promises Jehovah gives us when we cast our burden on Him?

***Cast** your burden (Lxx translates with *merimna* = anxiety) upon the LORD,  
and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.  
(Psalm 55:22+)*

**Are you trying to carry the burden by yourself dear Christian?** Hear and heed Jesus' call to you to release it to Him and to walk yoked to Him so that you might enter His perfect rest for your soul.

**William MacDonald** commenting on Jesus' light burden clarifies that "This does not mean that there are no problems, trials, labor, or heartaches in the Christian life. But it does mean that we do not have to bear them alone. We are yoked with One Who gives sufficient grace for every time of need. To serve Him is not bondage but perfect freedom." (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

## **TAXING COLLAR OF SELF RELAXING COLLAR OF SAVIOR**

**J. H. Jowett** says: The fatal mistake for the believer is to seek to bear life's load in a single collar. God never intended a man to carry his burden alone. Christ therefore deals only in yokes! A yoke is a neck harness for two, and the Lord himself pleads to be One of the two. He wants to share the labor of any galling task. The secret of peace and victory in the Christian life is found in putting off the taxing collar of "self" and accepting the Master's relaxing "yoke."

**Light** (1645) (**elaphros**) means not heavy, easy to bear, not burdensome, not difficult to bear, having little weight, easy to be lifted, borne or carried by physical strength. In the present passage the idea of "**light**" is that which is not oppressive and thus is easy to be endured. Other synonyms: lightweight, slight, easy, trifling, trivial (albeit when we are experiencing them, they are not "trivial" to us!), manageable, small, featherweight, "light as a feather"

The only other NT use is by Paul in his description of affliction, writing that...

momentary, **light** (elaphros) affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison (2Cor 4:17+)

Observe the striking contrast of sinful man's futile attempt to keep the law in his own strength...

And they (Scribes and Pharisees Mt 23:2 - masters of the art of legalism not liberty) tie up **heavy loads**, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries, and lengthen the tassels of their garments. (Mt 23:4, 5)

**William Barclay writes:** To the Jew religion was a thing of endless rules. A man lived his life in a forest of regulations which dictated every action of his life. He must listen forever to a voice which said, "Thou shalt not."

Beloved, perhaps that is the way you are trying to live your Christian life, by the repeated cry in your head of "*Thou shalt not!*" Jesus came to set us free from the bondage by the law. As Paul asked the Galatians...

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Galatians 3:2,3)

**Comment:** The clear implication is that we are born again by the Spirit (Jn 3:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) by grace through faith. As believers now we are to continue relying on the Spirit's power to live this supernatural life (see Gal 5:16).

[David Guzik](#) comments that in this passage...

Jesus summarizes this wonderful call with this. The **yoke is light** and the **burden is easy** because He bears it with us. When training a new animal (such as an ox) to plow, ancient farmers would often yoke it to an older, stronger, more experienced animal who would bear the burden and guide the young animal through his learning. If your yoke is hard and your burden is heavy, then it isn't His yoke or burden, and you aren't letting Him bear it with you. Jesus said it plainly: My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

To the lawyers Jesus declared...

**Woe** (Interjection announcing disaster, misery, grief or indignation) to you lawyers as well! For (Why? Always stop and **interrogate** each **term of explanation**) you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the **burdens** with one of your fingers. (Luke 11:46)

## JOHN AND THE JEWS

### James Hastings

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.—Matt. 11:11.

EVERYTHING that we are told of John the Baptist is unique. The asceticism of his life in the desert, the startling message with which he broke the silence maintained by the spirit of prophecy for four hundred years, the incorruptible sincerity of his humility, out of which no allurements could bribe him, the fearless honesty of his words, and the tragic horror of his death—all combine to give him a peculiar and distinctive place on the page of Scripture. But these things were, after all, only the indications and accompaniments of the singularity of his official position; for he stands alone among the servants of God. He came, no doubt, in the spirit and power of Elijah, and his dress is not the only thing about him that reminds us of the prophet of Gilead; but yet, take him for all in all, there is no one to whom he can be properly compared. He stood between the Jewish and the Christian dispensations, having much that connected him with both, and yet belonging exclusively to neither. He had more knowledge of the nature of the person and work of the Messiah than any of his predecessors among the prophets, and yet "he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

For centuries the thoughts and passion of the prophets had streamed into and filled the Jewish heart. They kindled there vague desires, wild hopes of a far-off kingdom, passionate discontent with things as they were. At last, about the time of the birth of Christ, these scattered dreams and hopes concentrated themselves into one desire, took form and substance in one prophecy—the advent

of the anointed King. It was the blazing up of an excitement which had been smouldering for a thousand years; it was the last and most powerful of a long series of oscillations which had been gradually increasing in swing and force. Now two things are true: first, wherever there is this passion in a people, it embodies itself in one man, who is to be its interpreter; secondly, wherever a great problem of the human spirit is growing towards its solution, and the soil of humanity is prepared for new seed from heaven, God sends His chosen creature to proclaim the truth which brings the light.

So a great man is the product of two things—of the passion of his age, and of the choice of God. So far as he is the former, he is but the interpreter of his own time, and only the highest man of his time; so far as he is the latter, he is beyond his age, and points forward to a higher revelation.

Such was the Baptist's position—the interpreter of the spiritual wants of the Jewish people, the prophet of a greater revelation in the future.

¶ There is something which touches in us that chord of sadness which is always ready to vibrate, when we think that John the Baptist was the last of all the heroes of the Old Dispensation, that with him closed the goodly fellowship of the prophets. For we cannot look at the last lighting up of the intellect of a man, the last effort for freedom of a dying nation, or the last glory of an ancient institution like that of the Jewish prophets, without a sense of sadness.

Men are we, and must grieve when even the shade  
Of that which once was great hath passed away.

But if there be some melancholy in the feeling with which we view the Baptist, there is also much of enthusiasm. If he was the last, he was also the greatest, of the prophets. That which all the others had dimly imaged, he presented in clear light; that which they had spoken in parables, he declared in the plainest words.<sup>1</sup>

## I AT HOME

1. As the traveller emerges from the dreary wilderness that lies between Sinai and the southern frontier of Palestine—a scorching desert, in which Elijah was glad to find shelter from the sword-like rays in the shade of the retem shrub—he sees before him a long line of hills, which is the beginning of “the hill country” of Judæa. In contrast with the sand wastes which he has traversed, the valleys seem to laugh and sing. Greener and yet greener grow the pasture lands, till he can understand how Nabal and other sheepmasters were able to find maintenance for vast flocks of sheep. Here and there are the crumbled ruins which mark the site of ancient towns and villages tenanted now by the jackal or the wandering Arab. Among these, a modern traveller has identified the site of Juttah, the village home of Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth.

Zacharias was a priest, “of the course of Abijah,” and twice a year he journeyed to Jerusalem to fulfil his office, for a week of six days and two Sabbaths. There were, Josephus tells us, somewhat more than 20,000 priests settled in Judæa at this time; and very many of them were like those whom Malachi denounced as degrading and depreciating the Temple services. The general character of the priesthood was deeply tainted by the corruption of the times, and as a class they were blind leaders of the blind. Not a few, however, were evidently deeply religious men, for we find that “a great number of the priests,” after the crucifixion, believed on Christ and joined His followers. In this class we must, therefore, place Zacharias, who is described as being “righteous before God.”

2. The parents were old, and had ceased to have the hope of children. In similar circumstances, the Father of the Faithful, in times remote, received the promise of a son; and the special favour of God, thus indicated, heightened his sense of gratitude and strained his anticipations to the utmost as to the issues bound up in his son's life. Zacharias and Elisabeth, in like manner, must have felt that their child was in a peculiar way a gift of God, and that a special importance was to attach to his life. When anything has been long desired, but hope of ever obtaining it has died out of the heart, and yet, after all, it is given, the gift appears infinitely greater than it would have done if received at the time when it was expected. The real reason, however, why in this case the gift was withheld so long was that the hour of Providence had not come. The fulness of time, when the Messiah should appear, and therefore when His forerunner should come into the world, was settled in the Divine plan and could not be altered by an hour. Therefore had Zacharias and his wife to wait.

One memorable autumn, when the land was full of the grapeharvest, Zacharias left his home, in the cradle of the hills, some three thousand feet above the Mediterranean, for his priestly service. Reaching the Temple, he would lodge in the cloisters and spend his days in the innermost court, which none might enter, save priests in their sacred garments. Among the various priestly duties, none was held in such high esteem as the offering of incense, which was presented morning and evening, on a special golden altar, in the Holy Place at the time of prayer. “The whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.” So honourable was this office that it was fixed by lot, and none was allowed to perform it twice. Only once in a priest's life was he permitted to sprinkle the incense on the burning coals, which an assistant had already brought from the altar of burnt-sacrifice, and spread on the altar of incense before the veil.

"And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense." How circumstantial the narrative is! There could be no mistake. He stood—and he stood on the right side. It was Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, that had been sent to speak to the priest to declare the good tidings that his prayer was heard; that his wife should bear a son, who should be called John; that the child should be welcomed with joy, should be a Nazirite, should be filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth, should inherit the spirit and power of Elijah, and should go before the face of Christ, to prepare His way, by turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just.

3. As a rule, the naming of children takes place in haphazard fashion, the child receiving a certain name simply because some relative has borne it before him, or because the sound has pleased the fancy of father or mother, or for some similar reason. But on this occasion the name was Divinely decided beforehand; and this was an indication that this child was created for a special purpose. The name "John" signifies, "The Lord is favourable," or, put more briefly, "The Gift of God." He was a gift to his parents, but also to far wider circles—to his country and to mankind.

Not only was this child to be a gift, he was also to be gifted; so the father was informed: "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord." To be a great man is the ambition of every child of Adam; and the thought of having as a son one who is a great man is a suggestion which thrills every parent's heart. Greatness is, indeed, an ambiguous word. Who is great? To be notorious, to be much in the mouths of men, to have a name which is a household word—this is the superficial conception of greatness. But such greatness may be very paltry; to as much greatness as this, multitudes of the meanest and most worthless of mankind have attained. But John was to be great "in the sight of the Lord." This is a different matter; it implies not only genuine gifts, but gifts employed for other than selfish ends.

4. It was an atmosphere of reverence, conscientiousness, and refinement that John breathed from the first. He belonged to the choicest caste of the chosen people, using the word without its stigma. The son of a priestly race, a race which held the chief and most unquestioned position in the nation, he inherited its seclusive tendencies, and to his opening mind its quiet and retirement must have been congenial. He was of the priestly race on both sides, for his mother was "of the daughters of Aaron." Heredity and its bias count for much in the inclination of the developing life. The fineness of grain that comes from a godly and cultured ancestry, especially when there is no concern about the basal questions, "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" constitutes a mental and spiritual capital of the golden denomination, a capital whose value can hardly be overestimated.

John's recollections in after years would be of the constant perusal by his father of the sacred books, and of his patient teaching of their contents to him. To no ordinance of the Lord was the devout Hebrew parent more faithful than to that which enjoined the careful catechizing of his children in the first principles of their faith and first records of their history: "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:6, 7).

Family worship is also a strong and sacred power. We can almost see the small group in the eventide reverently laying aside other duties, while "the sire turns o'er wi' patriarchal grace," or rather unrolls, some copy of the Law or of the Prophets:

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,  
How Abram was the friend of God on high;  
Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage  
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;  
Or, how the royal bard did groaning lie  
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;  
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;  
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;  
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.<sup>1</sup>

Happy is he or she who has such a father and mother, and whose childhood is nurtured in such a home. Out of such home have come the men who have been the reformative and regenerative forces of the world. The influence of the mother is especially noteworthy; nearly all men who have been conspicuously great and good have owed much to their mothers. In this narrative the mother is less prominent than the father; but enough is told to show of what manner of spirit she was. One likes to think of the three months spent by Mary under her roof. The homage paid by Elisabeth to her on whom had been bestowed the greater honour of being the mother of the Lord was an anticipation of the humility of her son, when he said, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

¶ In Phillips Brooks the power of observation, which constitutes the basis of the imaginative faculty, was fused with the vast power of feeling which came from his mother. She had the spirit of the reformer, who is born to set the world right and cannot contemplate with serenity the world as it is. She hungered and thirsted for righteousness whose coming is so slow. So strong was her will, so intense her nature, that she grew impatient with the obstacles in the way. Phillips Brooks knew the facts of life with his father's eyes, and the hopes and possibilities of life through the eyes of his mother. Had he received by transmission only the outlook of his father

without the inspired heroism of his mother, he would not have risen to greatness. But, on the other hand, had he inherited from his mother alone, he might have been known as an ardent reformer, not wholly unlike his distinguished kinsman, Wendell Phillips,—a type familiar in New England; but the wonderful fascination of his power for men of every class and degree, the universal appeal to a common humanity, would have been wanting.<sup>1</sup>

## II IN THE WILDERNESS

I think he had not heard of the far towns;  
Nor of the deeds of men, nor of kings' crowns:  
    Before the thought of God took hold of him,  
    As he was sitting dreaming in the calm  
Of one first noon, upon the desert's rim,  
    Beneath the tall fair shadows of the palm,  
    All overcome with some strange inward balm.

So wrote the Irish poet, Arthur O'Shaughnessy, of John the Baptist; and so writing he touched two matters which are very important to any man who would understand the desert prophet. The first is that nature had a great share in making him. The sights and sounds of the solitary wilderness were for years familiar to him. The expansive sky above, the pure air to breathe, and all the wide outdoor life of the desert became a part of the very character of John. The physical health which nature gives to those who live on most intimate terms with her was his. The quick eye, the direct and incisive habit of mind, the freedom from all the graceful deceptions of civilization, the rugged, expressive speech which might have been taken fresh from the soil—all these were the contributions of that life in the desert which was a school to John.

1. In the meagreness of the historic record, no mention is made of the occasion on which John definitely left his home and betook himself to the open country of the southern borderland. But most probably it was on the death of one of his now aged parents. As a Nazirite, he was not to "come near to a dead body." "He shall not make himself unclean," said the Law, "for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because his separation unto God is upon his head." And if we suppose that he afterwards returned home, it would be but for the short time his other parent lived, on whose death he, having no near relatives or close personal friends (for he was, and probably always had been, of a solitary habit), and having, moreover, his manner of life shaped out for him, partly by his vow, and partly by those growing thoughts within him which drove him out, would finally leave "the hill country of Judæa." Then he made his dwelling-place far from the homes and haunts of men, among "the deserts and mountains, and dens and caves of the earth."

¶ "Oh, how often, when living in the desert, in that extensive solitude which, dried up by the burning rays of the sun, offered a frightful dwelling-place to the monks, it seemed to me that I was in the midst of the pleasures of Rome." Here in these brief words St. Jerome has revealed to us his abode, bereft of all the comforts which are needed for the miserable life of man! The ground dry and burnt up, without a vestige of verdure, no plants, no trees to afford a shade from the noontide heat. There were no towering cedars, no luxuriant palms, nor stately trees affording fruit, pleasing the eye by their beauty, no running waters, no refreshing streams to cool the air and afford a soothing murmur to the ear, no kind of rest or refreshment—in a word, a desert very much deserted of men. I mean men whose desires go no farther than the earth, yet as such even do not seek so unfertile a land. Here, indeed, did this great man fix his dwelling-place, he who pretends to no one thing of earth. Here did that divine youth imprison himself of his own free will, and here did that clear light of the Church bury the best and most flourishing days of his life, fully resolved upon spending it all here, had Heaven not designed otherwise, and brought him forth for the good of the world to be its great and most brilliant beacon of light. Nevertheless, we might well say that although the body was as a fact in so rough a place, yet the soul was in the enjoyment of supreme delight.<sup>1</sup>

2. Why did John go to the wilderness? Hermits went to the wilderness of Judæa, as Josephus tells us about Banus, who "lived in the desert, and used no other clothing than grew upon trees, and had no other food than grew of its own accord, and bathed himself in cold water frequently." Josephus "imitated him in those things" for three years. Keim thinks that John also led a "hermit life." Certainly he lived a solitary life, but, when he comes forth at last, it is not as a hermit or man of the woods. He did indeed lead "a rural life away from the capital," but it is by no means clear that he was an anchorite, though many of them came to these regions. It has, indeed, been urged that John went into the desert, like Josephus, to study the doctrine of the Essenes, and that he became one. But there is no foundation for this idea. These cenobites had monasteries along the shores of the Dead Sea. They numbered some four thousand in all. The Essenes were an offshoot of Pharisaism with ascetic tendencies concerning animal food, marriage, and animal sacrifices, but with an admixture of the philosophy of Parseeism and Pythagoreanism, including the worship of the sun. But there is no real reason for thinking that John had any contact with them; certainly he did not accept their cardinal tenets about animal food (he ate locusts), or marriage, which he did not condemn, or about sun-worship, which he did not practise. He did practise the ascetic life, as was true of many others not Essenes, but he came forth and lived among men. "He preached the Kingdom of God; they preached isolation. They abandoned society; he strove to reform it."

His predecessor Amos had been a herdsman and a dresser of sycamores in that very region eight centuries before. Like Amos, also, he would meditate upon his high calling better in this wild and desolate region. But John was no mere imitator of anyone. He was *sui generis*, and all the more so because of his grapple with himself in the wilderness. He went apart, not, as the usual monastic does, to gain merit with God, but to face his life problem and to adjust himself to it. His going was “an absolute break with the prevalent Pharisaic type of piety.” He went, not to stay, but to get ready to come back, to come back to save his people. But John “learned his lesson at the feet of no human teacher.” Reynolds has a fine word: “His education was the memory of his childhood and the knowledge of his commission, and was effected by the Spirit of the living God. His schoolmasters were the rocks of the desert of Judæa, the solemn waters of the Dead Sea, the eternal Presence that fills the solitudes of nature, the sins, the shame, the vows, the hopes, the professions of his countrymen.”

¶ Over against the Baptist’s desert and cave stands a contrasted landscape as attractive as the desert is repellent. It is the landscape of this natural human life, the life which the hand of God made when He made the earth and the creatures, and then made man after His own image and breathed into his clay the breath of life, and bade him dwell on the earth and eat its fruits and have dominion over all its living kinds. The life of man, even as we know it, strangely marred by some malign influence in things that make for famine, and mischance, and pain, and strife, even so has much of beauty and delight and interest in it. Are we not to enjoy this charm and joy? Did not God who made it look on it, and behold it was very good? Why indeed was human life, with its activities, concerns, and pleasures created at all if it was not to be lived, and lived at the best and fullest? Is it not to the glory of God that we men should exercise all our powers of body, although to exercise be also to enjoy; that we should taste all the savours of this earthly existence, perceive with eye and ear its beauty and its music; that we should let the mind range and the passion play, and not be scared from using these energies just because in them there is delight? We look on this landscape of the smiling human life, and the Baptist’s desert and cave wear a most grim, squalid, repulsive look, and we cannot believe God meant these places for the residence of the human spirit, or designed that narrowed, starved existence of the ascetic for the life of His children.<sup>1</sup>

3. With his principles fixed by long meditation, John came forth among men (as our Lord said), not a reed shaken with the wind, swayed this way or that by the opinions of others, but firm, even if he should be solitary, in his own opinions; not clothed in soft raiment, but a protest against the luxuriousness that ever threatens to smother our life, and a proclamation that a man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth—one who, both by his appearance and by his words, drew men away from conventionalities to what was real and abiding in human life.

His appearance must have been very striking. His hair was long and unkempt, and his features were tanned with the sun and the air of the desert. Probably they were thinned, too, by austerity; for his habitual food was of the simplest order, consisting only of locusts and wild honey. Locusts, dried and preserved, form still, at the present day, an article of food in the East, but only among the very poor; people in the least degree luxurious or scrupulous would not look at it. Wild honey, formed by hives of bees in the crevices of rocks or in rifted trees, abounds in the desert-places of Palestine, and may be gathered by anyone who wanders there. The raiment of the Baptist corresponded with his food, consisting of a garment of the very coarsest and cheapest cloth, made of camel’s hair. The girdle of the Oriental is an article of clothing on which a great deal of taste and expense is laid out, being frequently of fine material and gay colouring, with the added adornment of elaborate needlework; but the girdle with which John’s garment was confined was no more than a rough band of leather. Everything, in short, about his external appearance denoted one who had reduced the claims of the body to the lowest possible terms, that he might devote himself entirely to the life of the spirit.

¶ Some preachers derive a certain amount of influence from the impression made by their personal appearance. When, as in the case of Chalmers, on the broad and ample forehead there rests the air of philosophic thought, and in the liquid eye there shines the sympathy of a benevolent nature, the goodwill of the congregation is conciliated before the word is uttered. Still more fascinating is the impression when, as in the case of Newman, the stern and emaciated figure suggests the secret fasts and midnight vigils of one who dwells in a hidden world, out of which he comes with a Divine message to his followers.<sup>1</sup>

4. The long silence of the desert was broken by a ringing call of no uncertain sound, the call of one sure of his message, and burning to deliver it. We can see the tall, gaunt figure of the roughly-clad recluse entering one of the scattered hamlets of the borderland, standing like an apparition as he cried out the short, sharp sentence which pierced each of its quiet homes, and penetrated every heart that heard it—“Repent! the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” We can see the groups of people too, children in the foreground, flocking round him wonderingly. To them he is a new embodiment of the Law and the Prophets. His “Repent!” is an appeal to the former, a demand for a moral “baring” until the bed-rock is reached upon which Jehovah can build; while his statement that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” is a reaffirmation of old and cherished prophecies.

(1) “Repentance” is perhaps not the best rendering of the first note of John’s message; “conversion” would be a more literal translation. It was for an entire change in the habits of thought and conduct that John called; and this change included not only the forsaking of sin but the seeking of God. Still, the forsaking of sin was very prominent in John’s demands; for we are told how pointedly he referred to the favourite sins of different classes.

Nor has repentance in the mind of John to do only with the past, as his anticipations of the New Kingdom are conversant with the

future. No: his preaching of repentance has to do with the future, and is full of animation and brightness, from the sight he has of the coming of Jesus Christ. Repentance with him means the personal equipment of the man for taking his part in the construction of this New Kingdom.

Also of John a calling and a crying  
Rang in Bethabara till strength was spent,  
Cared not for counsel, stayed not for replying,  
John had one message for the world, Repent.

John, than which man a sadder or a greater  
Not till this day has been of woman born,  
John like some iron peak by the Creator  
Fired with the red glow of the rushing morn.

This when the sun shall rise and overcome it  
Stands in his shining desolate and bare,  
Yet not the less the inexorable summit  
Flamed him his signal to the happier air.<sup>1</sup>

(2) The other note of John's preaching was the Kingdom of God. This was not a novel watchword. The ideal of the Jews had always been a theocracy. When Saul, their first king, was appointed, the prophet Samuel condemned the act of the people as a lapse: they ought to have desired no king but God. And when, in subsequent ages, the kings of the land with rare exceptions turned out miserable failures, the better and deeper spirits always sighed for a reign of God, which would ensure national prosperity. The deeper the nation sank, the more passionate grew this aspiration; and, when the good time coming was thought of, it was always in the form of a Kingdom of God.

Alongside the proclamation of the Kingdom was the uncompromising insistence on "the wrath to come." John saw that the advent of the King would bring inevitable suffering to those who were living in self-indulgence and sin. There would be careful discrimination. He who was coming would carefully discern between the righteous and the wicked; between those who served God and those who served Him not; and the preacher enforced his words by an image familiar to Orientals. When the wheat is reaped, it is bound in sheaves and carted to the threshing-floor, which is generally a circular spot of hard ground from fifty to one hundred feet in diameter. On this the wheat is threshed from the chaff by manual labour, but the two lie intermingled till the evening, when the grain is caught up in broad shovels or fans, and thrown against the evening breeze, as it passes swiftly over the fevered land; thus the chaff is borne away, while the wheat falls heavily to the earth. Likewise, cried the Baptist, there shall be a very careful process of discrimination before the unquenchable fires are lighted, so that none but chaff shall be consigned to the flames—a prediction which was faithfully fulfilled.

¶ In considering the wrath of God as always and at all times working with His love, the preaching of John the Baptist is a great assistance. The Jews, even in their most degenerate times, seem to have never doubted that all the tribulation which as a nation they had ever borne was part of that special care and government of God of which they were so justly proud. They acknowledged, not without awe and reverence, that a wrath to come was essentially bound up with their best hopes and their highest aspirations. They were to pass, as a people, through great suffering into noblest exaltation. We, under the Christian dispensation, have throughout our history greatly lost by inadequately realizing that same conception. In regard both of our individual and of our national life, we have even more reason than the Jews ever had to look upon Divine wrath as only the sterner and more solemn aspect of Divine love. "The wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18) is a principal means whereby, in time or eternity, to bring sinners back to Him, and to prepare the way for the fulness of the Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

5. His words rang like peals of thunder over the mountains and reverberated down the wadys to the Dead Sea. They echo yet through the centuries, the words of this Voice in the Wilderness. It was mighty preaching that smote the hearts of men. Some were superficial, as always, and the words passed over their heads. Others had only a secular notion of the Kingdom, and began to dream of place and power in that Kingdom. The self-indulgent began to hope for change, for a new king who would destroy the Law and the prophets. The poor and downtrodden would hope for better times somehow. But the devout and deeply spiritual were stirred to the very heart. Men and women talked religion under the trees, by the river brink, on the rocks of the desert, by the roadside, at home. A new day had come to Israel; a real preacher of righteousness had spoken again.

¶ True preaching struggles right away from formula, back into fact, and life, and the revelation of God and heaven. I make no objection to formulas; they are good enough in their place, and a certain instinct of our nature is comforted in having some articulations of results thought out to which our minds may refer. Formulas are the jerked meat of salvation—if not always the strong meat, as many try to think—dry and portable and good to keep, and when duly seethed and softened, and served with needful condiments, just possible to be eaten; but for the matter of living, we really want something fresher and more nutritious. On the

whole, the kind of thinking talent wanted for a great preacher is that which piercingly loves; that which looks into things and through them, ploughing up pearls and ores, and now and then a diamond. It will not seem to go on metaphysically or scientifically, but with a certain roundabout sense and vigour. And the people will be gathered to it because there is a gospel fire burning in it that warms them to a glow. This is power.<sup>2</sup>

(1) "Many of the Pharisees and Sadducees" came. These two religious parties disliked one another very much, but they are both deserving of John's condemnation. They will later be found working hand in hand to compass the death of Jesus. For the moment they bury their theological differences and rivalry for place and power in the common curiosity about John. By their distinctive dress, their separateness from the multitude among whom they slowly moved; by the superiority of their demeanour, and by that air of refinement which can come only from culture, although the culture may be narrow both in base and superstructure, the penetrative eye of John singled them out. Like the Master who came after him, he employs terms that are hot and scathing. "O offspring of vipers,—O viperous brood,—who hath warned you to flee from the coming wrath?" It was bitterly, it was uncourtly,—but oh, it was truly said! They were the offspring of vipers, for often had their fathers stung to death the benefactors, the saviours, sent from heaven to save the nation; and soon were the children to show themselves born in the likeness of their sires, by stinging with persecution and death that greater One whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to unloose.

(2) While John has been anathematizing Pharisees and Sadducees, various questions have been rising in various minds as to the bearing of the Kingdom upon themselves, and what manner of men they ought to be to enter into it. Did they also come under the lash? "And the multitudes asked him, saying, What then must we do?" John's answer is plain, direct, and pointed: "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none: and he that hath food, let him do likewise."

(3) Then the publicans come with their question: "Teacher, what shall we do?"—by no means an idle question, put for the sake of hearing what kind of an answer the prophet will make in reply, but one that had behind it the sincere purpose of entering the Kingdom, for they came "to be baptized." John's reply to their question was not a summons to Temple service or sacrifice, nor was it ascetic or revolutionary in its tone. "Exact," said he, "no more than is appointed you." Extortion was the fierce temptation of the class. It would have been easier for the publicans to keep all the ritual than radically to change the whole spirit of their lives. He tested sincerity in a manner at once definite and practical. His answer involved no doctrine of human brotherhood or Divine Fatherhood; it was a dogmatic appeal to the conscience of men who had laid their ethical sense to sleep. So they received their answer—one so complete and self-evident that from it there was no appeal.

(4) Then came the soldiers. Apparently careless, but alert, they move about in small groups among the people, and, coming near the prophet, break a lance with him: "And what shall we do?" His reply is personal, not national. The careless soldiers must have been surprised at its pointedness. Its three parts were short, sharp home-thrusts—"Do not extort money by threats or violence from any man." It was not easy for quiet civilians to resist the demands, although unjust, of trained soldiers, strong in physique, and without effeminate pity for those from whom money might be extracted. Mercy, consideration for such had but small weight with them. "Do not cheat by false accusation; be too honest to act as mere informers; do not bleed people's purses by threatening to lay fictitious charges." On the other hand, "Be content with your pay, and as you agreed to it, when you went into the service, let it serve you."

This was the style of John's preaching. However various the classes of people or the types of character, his "exhortation" took them back to righteousness of conduct, to the first principles of ordinary morality. There was with him no slight or hasty dealing with sin; he required evidences of reform in character, in "good works."

¶ It was a solemn scene, doubtless, when crowds from every part of Palestine gathered by the side of Jordan, and there renewed, as it were, the covenant made between their ancestor and Jehovah. It seemed the beginning of a new age, the restoration of the ancient theocracy, the final close of that dismal period in which the race had lost its peculiarity, had taken a varnish of Greek manners, and had contributed nothing but a few dull chapters of profane history, filled with the usual chaos of faction fights, usurpations, royal crimes, and outbreaks, blind and brave, of patriotism and the love of liberty. But many of those who witnessed the scene and shared in the enthusiasm which it awakened must have remembered it in later days as having inspired hopes which had not been realized. It must have seemed to many that the theocracy had not in fact been restored, that the old routine had been interrupted only for a moment, that the baptized nation had speedily contracted new pollution, and that no deliverance had been wrought from the "wrath to come." And they may have asked in doubt, Is God so little parsimonious of His noblest gift as to waste upon a doomed generation that which He did not vouchsafe to many nobler generations that had preceded them, and to send a second and far greater Elijah to prophesy in vain?

But if there were such persons, they were ignorant of one important fact. John the Baptist was like the Emperor Nerva. In his career it was given him to do two things—to inaugurate a new régime, and also to nominate a successor who was far greater than himself. And by this successor his work was taken up, developed, completed, and made permanent; so that, however John may have seemed to his own generation to have lived in vain, and scenes on the banks of Jordan to have been the delusive promise of a future that was never to be, at the distance of near two thousand years he appears not less but far greater than he appeared to his

contemporaries, and all that his baptism promised to do appears utterly insignificant compared with what it has actually done.<sup>1</sup>

6. The prophets of Israel were poets as well as preachers; and one way in which they displayed their poetical endowment was by the invention of physical symbols to represent the truths which they also expressed in words. Thus, it will be remembered, Jeremiah at one period went about Jerusalem wearing a yoke on his shoulders, in order to impress on his fellow-citizens the certainty that they were to become subject to the Babylonian power; and similar symbolical actions of other prophets will occur to every Bible reader. In the Baptist, ancient prophecy, after centuries of silence, had come to life again; and he demonstrated that he was the true heir of men like Isaiah and Jeremiah by the exercise also of this poetical gift. He embodied his teaching not only in words but in an expressive symbol. And never was symbol more felicitously chosen; for baptism exactly expressed the main drift of his teaching.

It has been well established, in the light of modern research, that John was by no means the originator of the rite of baptism, which has its counterparts in the Greek mysteries, in the religions of India, Persia, Egypt, Asia Minor. The washing of the body with running water expressed by a natural symbolism that cleansing from inward defilement without which there could be no access to the Divine Presence. Judaism itself affords several analogies to the rite of baptism. We need instance only the lustrations demanded by the Mosaic law, the ceremonial washings of the Essenes, the purification by water which was part of the ritual employed in the admission of proselytes.

It is more than probable that John ascribed a real validity to his baptism, apart from its symbolic meaning. He undoubtedly sought, in the first instance, to effect a moral change, and administered the rite only to those who professed repentance; yet the inward process required to be completed and sealed by the visible rite. When baptism meets us later in the New Testament, as an ordinance of the Christian Church, we find even Paul describing it as a mystery, by which the Spirit is, in some actual sense, imparted. He assumes that this view is shared, in still larger measure, by those whom he addresses; and it probably had attached itself to the rite from the beginning. Ancient religion made little attempt to discriminate between a symbol and its spiritual content. Just as the spoken word was vaguely identified with the person or thing that it designated, so the outward sign was confused with the reality, and was supposed to carry with it a religious worth and power. That a value of this nature was generally attributed to John's baptism may be inferred from the question with which Jesus, at a later day, silenced the priests and elders: "The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?" The question, it will be observed, refers to the baptism, not merely to the religious teaching, of John. It would have been meaningless if John had claimed to be nothing more than a preacher of righteousness, enforcing by symbol what he had taught in words. But he had offered his baptism as an actual means of obtaining a certain grace from God; and hence a controversy had arisen as to his sanction and authority.

¶ Baptism, when administered to an adult, is a visible assurance of the same great blessings that it assures to a child. It does not confer on him the blessings of the Christian redemption, but declares that they are his. It is a wonderful gospel—a gospel to him individually. If he has genuine faith he will receive it with immeasurable joy. He will look back upon the day of his baptism as kings look back upon the day of their coronation. It was the visible, external transition from awful peril to eternal safety in the love and power of Christ. It divided his old life in sin from his new life in God. He will speak of the hour when he was "baptized into Christ" (Gal. 3:27), was "cleansed by the washing of water with the word" (Eph. 5:26), was "buried with [Christ] in baptism" (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12), and was "raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:12). But kings are not made kings by being crowned; they are crowned because they are already kings: their coronation is only the assurance that the power and greatness of sovereignty are theirs. And it is not by baptism that we are made Christ's inheritance; it is because we are Christ's inheritance that we are baptized.<sup>1</sup>

I think, perhaps, this trust has sprung  
From one short word  
Said over me when I was young,—  
So young, I heard  
It, knowing not that God's name signed  
My brow, and sealed me His, though blind.

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