

**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.**

After instructing and sending out His disciples to spread the news of the coming of the kingdom, Jesus also left to teach and preach in “their” cities—probably a reference to the area of the Galilee since they were all Galileans.

*Acts 1:9–11 “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, **Ye men of Galilee**, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”*

*Acts 2:1–7 “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, **Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?**”*

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

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

Herod had put John the Baptist in prison for confronting him with his sin in marrying his brother’s wife.

*Mark 6:17–18 “For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife.”*

John had evidently heard from his disciples about Jesus ministry, and he sent two of his disciples to ask Him if He was truly the Messiah. I can certainly sympathize with John. He surely couldn’t help wondering why he was sitting in prison and Jesus, if the Messiah, doing nothing to rescue him.

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

**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.**

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

The gospel of Luke adds a little more information concerning what happened when John's disciples questioned Jesus.

*Luke 7:20–21 “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? And **in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.**”*

Jesus wasn't shocked or hurt that John was questioning Him. His concern was toward affirming John's faith. So, immediately He began working miracles among the people in the presence of John's disciples. Only then did He instruct John's disciples to go and tell him all the things that they had heard Jesus teach and seen Him do. Tell him that the blind were receiving their sight, the lame were now walking, lepers were cleansed, the deaf could hear, people had been raised from the dead and the poor were hearing the gospel. This report was in direct reference to the words of the prophet Isaiah describing the coming Messiah.

*Isaiah 35:4–6 “Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing....”*

Then the Lord pronounces a blessing on those that are not “offended” by Him. The Greek references “trip up, stumble or entice to sin.” In other words, blessed are those whose faith in Jesus stays strong in spite of circumstances and expectations.

I was reminded again that Jesus often quoted the word of God in support of who He was and what He taught—and we should follow His example.

**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?**

**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.**

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

**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.**

John's disciples left to go back to John and deliver Jesus' answer to his question. As they were leaving, Jesus turned to the multitudes to talk to them about John. They had probably heard John's disciples question Jesus. Maybe he was publicly affirming John's ministry since there were probably many who were experiencing doubts like John in light of his public declaration of Jesus as the Messiah and the fact that he was now in jail.

Jesus often teaches by asking questions—often rhetorical. By asking them if they had gone to see John because he was weak like a reed blown by the wind, He knew that they would be reminded that John boldly and strongly declared His message. By asking them if they had gone to see a man wearing clothes befitting a king, they would be reminded of John's clothing of camel hair and a leather girdle. Jesus reminds them that they had gone to see John because he was obviously a prophet; however, he was actually more than a prophet. He was a specific prophet whose coming was foretold by the prophet Malachi.

*Malachi 3:1 "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts."*

John was the prophet privileged with getting to announce the arrival of the Messiah.

**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.**

John could receive no higher honor than bestowed upon Him by Jesus with this declaration. He declared that there had never been another man "born of women" that was greater than John the Baptist. The phrase "born of woman" makes reference to one born from procreation between husband and wife. Jesus was in a whole different category; He is the God-man, born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Ghost.

Jesus then goes on to declare that even the least honored person in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John. That statement had to make jaws drop. How could that be? I think it is because the man John was not a new creation in Christ indwelt by the Holy Spirit; the indwelling Holy Spirit was only given after Jesus' resurrection and ascension.

**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.**

This is a hard verse, so I looked at many translations as well as the Greek. John MacArthur helped me out with the following information: "There are two possible ways to translate this verse. There's a verb in the middle, the verb biazō, and it can be translated passive or reflexive. And that means it can be translated passive as if something is doing the action to it, or reflexive as if it is doing it itself."

The King James translation takes the passive stance. This implies that the message of the kingdom of heaven that John the Baptist began announcing and that was delivered with even greater power and authority by Jesus and His disciples resulted in violence against those declaring that truth. The religious leaders of the day posed some of the most aggressive responses to this message to the point of calling Jesus a representative of Beelzebub. They refused to

consider the possibility that Jesus was the Messiah.

The NIV translation takes the reflexive position: *“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.”*

This translation posits that the message of the kingdom of heaven proclaimed by John the Baptist, Jesus and His disciples was making great progress and accepted by many. Why? Because Jesus gave evidence to the truth of His message with great signs and miracles in fulfillment of scripture. In spite of such evidence, the religious leaders, the ones with the greatest influence among the people, aggressively confronted Jesus and rejected His message. I am reminded of the words of Paul in connection with this truth.

*Ephesians 6:12 “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”*

Without a doubt, evil spiritual forces were active in the responses of many who were determined to reject the truth and prevent its acceptance.

Frankly, I think both positions declare truth.

**Matthew 11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.**

**Matthew 11:14 And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come.**

**Matthew 11:15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.**

With verse 13 Jesus declares that the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom as foretold by the prophets and typified by the tabernacle and temple and the sacrifices required by the law to maintain fellowship with God had been fulfilled. Jesus embodied the fulfillment of both.

Because of that truth, Jesus declared that John was the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy of the coming of Elijah if the people would accept the truth of the message being declared.

*Malachi 4:5-6 “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers....”*

Jesus affirmed this truth once again to His disciples after His transfiguration.

*Matthew 17:10–13 “And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.”*

Luke provides more information in his record of Zechariah's angelic visitation announcing the birth of his son.

*Luke 1:11–17 “And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John....and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. **And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias**, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

John the Baptist was prophesied to come “in the spirit and power of Elijah.” In His omniscience, God knew that Jesus would be rejected as the Messiah, and that truth reverberates throughout Old Testament prophecy.

Then a phrase that is very familiar to this student of prophecy: “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” In other words, (my paraphrase) “If you are truly seeking the truth, believe Me because I am telling you the truth.”

**Matthew 11:16 ¶ But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, 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.**

At this point the Lord compares the people of Israel, especially the religious leaders, to children that want their own way. They refuse to accept that they were sinners in need of repentance as declared by John or to believe the truth declared by Jesus in spite of the miracles He performed.

**Matthew 11:18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. 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.**

John and Jesus were very different in personality. John was very focused on his ministry to the exclusion of social functions, and he was accused of being demon possessed. Jesus readily mixed with the people socially, and He was called a glutton and drunkard. Moreover, He befriended “publicans and sinners,” those considered unacceptable in polite society.

“But wisdom is justified of her children” – I think this is saying that wisdom would cause one to understand that both John and Jesus were to be believed in light of scripture. Both acted in accordance with the prophecies they fulfilled.

**Matthew 11:20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: 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.**

**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.**

Jesus now reveals Himself as Judge and singles out three cities to make His point. He declares that those in the cities that had witnessed His miracles—specifically, Chorazin and Betsaida (Peter and Andrew’s hometown)—yet had refused to repent of their sins would experience greater judgment than those from Tyre and Sidon. Jesus declares that if those in Tyre and Sidon had witnessed those same miracles, they would have repented right away in sackcloth and ashes.

**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.**

**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.**

Jesus then addresses the people of Capernaum, a city that had been honored as pretty much “home base” to Jesus and in which He had performed unique miracles—healing the centurion’s servant, healing the woman with the issue of blood, healing Peter’s mother, healing the man sick with palsy, raising Jairus’ daughter from the dead and more. He then declares that if the people of Sodom had witnessed such miracles, it would still exist. Instead, the people of Sodom will not be judged as severely in the day of judgment as will the people of Capernaum who refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah in spite of the overwhelming evidence presented to them.

These statements probably produced great outrage among the people of those cities who could not possibly fathom that God would judge any of His chosen people more harshly than those heathen, idolatrous peoples.

Again we see a reference to degrees of punishment in hell. The truth is that the more you know, the more you are held accountable. I am not sure how this plays out, but I am sure that just knowing that you had rejected the Messiah when presented with so much evidence will certainly produce greater mental suffering.

**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.**

**Matthew 11:26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.**

**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*.**

The Lord next broke out in prayer to His Father, acknowledging Him as “Lord of heaven and earth.” He thanks the Father for concealing the truth from those who in their pride thought they were so wise and smart while revealing that

same truth to those ready to admit their need and humble themselves before Him. This principle always encourages me in my study of scripture. God wants ordinary people to understand the truth. God's will and the truth of His word is not just revealed to those considered intellectually elite.

Jesus also thanks God for acting in accordance with what is good and pleasing to Him. He publicly declared that the Father had given Him His authority and power. This truth is clearly support in scripture.

*John 3:35 "The Father loveth the Son, **and hath given all things** into his hand."*

*Matthew 28:18 "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, **All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.**"*

*John 17:1–2 "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: **As thou hast given him power over all flesh**, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."*

*Philippians 3:20–21 "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working **whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.**"*

*1 Timothy 6:13–16 "I give thee charge in the sight of God...That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, **who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords**; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."*

*Hebrews 1:1–3 "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, **whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds**; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and **upholding all things by the word of his power**, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high...."*

This is another one of those truths that are hard to understand. If Jesus is God, then why does He say that the Father "gives" Him power? I think the answer is in the fact that He is talking as the "Man" Jesus sent by the Father to redeem the world.

He then makes an observation with which most could identify. No one knows the Son like the Father and no one knows the Father like the Son. Then He adds an important "and." Jesus gets to choose those to whom the Father is revealed—those who come to Him in faith.

Instead of getting stumbled by the terminology of Jesus choosing, I choose to

concentrate on the truth of the whole of scripture—knowing that my Lord is defined as love and truth and cannot lie.

1 John 4:8 *“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for **God is love.**”*

Deuteronomy 32:3–4 *“...ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: **a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.**”*

Titus 1:1–2 *“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; In hope of eternal life, **which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began....**”*

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever** believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

John 12:46 *“I am come a light into the world, that **whosoever** believeth on me should not abide in darkness.”*

Acts 2:21 *“And it shall come to pass, that **whosoever** shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

Romans 10:13 *“For **whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

2 Peter 3:9 *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**”*

Ezekiel 18:32 *“For **I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.**”*

1 Timothy 2:3–4 *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; **Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.**”*

**Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

**Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.**

**Matthew 11:30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**

What wonderful words of comfort Jesus utters. He invites all who are weary and full of anxiety to come to Him. If you do, He promises that you will find rest and refreshment. It sounds like an oxymoron for Him to next say that one must “take my yoke upon you” after just saying that He will give rest. To be yoked to Jesus is a picture of sharing our burdens with Him. The more we learn about Him, the more we will understand that He is gentle and humble, not rough and prideful in how He deals with us. His yoke is one of graciousness and kindness. He actually does all the heavy lifting and pulling. How is this possible? Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Jesus isn’t saying that we will never

experience struggle or suffering; He is saying that He will strengthen and empower us to be able to handle whatever life throws at us if we will but yield to His yoke because He will be with us all the way.

*Hebrews 13:5–6 “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, **I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.** So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”*

*Matthew 28:18–20 “And Jesus came and spake unto them....and, lo, **I am with you alway,** even unto the end of the world.”*

I think these are special words of comfort and encouragement to those to whom Jesus was ministering at that time. The Pharisees and religious leaders had created a tradition that was accepted as part of God’s law that placed a very heavy burden upon the people. Jesus speaks to this truth later in Matthew.

*Matthew 23:2–4 “Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. **For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders;** but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.”*

I believe sin is the source of our greatest weariness and heaviest burdens. Obviously, sin in one’s life leads one to making bad choices that always lead to temptation and/or destruction. Sin is even the root cause of all things with which the world likes to blame God. Were it not for sin, there would not be disease or natural disasters. It is sin that leads men to commit such awful atrocities against one another. It is sin that leads men to abuse positions of power and authority. If only humanity would recognize the healing and riches that are ours for the taking as a gift from God.

*Ephesians 2:4–9 “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: **it is the gift of God:** Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*