CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Matthew Chapter 11 — John's Question, Unrepentant Cities, and the Invitation of Jesus

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 10 ended with Jesus sending out His twelve apostles.

Matthew Chapter 11 begins with Jesus continuing His own ministry in the towns of Galilee.

But the chapter quickly turns to a surprising question.

John the Baptist is in prison.

This is the same John who baptized Jesus.

The same John who saw the Spirit come down like a dove.

The same John who heard the Father's voice from heaven.

Now, sitting in a dark prison cell, John sends a question to Jesus:

“Are You the one who is to come, or should we look for another?”

Even great believers can struggle with doubt.

Jesus does not scold John.

He points to the evidence.

The blind see.

The lame walk.

The dead are raised.

The poor hear the good news.

Then Jesus honors John before the crowd.

John was more than a prophet.

He was the messenger promised in Scripture.

He was the Elijah who was to come.

But then Jesus turns to the people of His generation.

They rejected John because he was too strict.

They rejected Jesus because He was too friendly with sinners.

Nothing pleased them.

Then Jesus gives a solemn warning to the towns where He had done most of His miracles.

They had seen the most.

But they had not repented.

Their judgment would be worse than that of Tyre, Sidon, and even Sodom.

Then the chapter turns again.

Jesus prays to His Father.

And He gives one of the most beautiful invitations in the whole Bible:

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11 therefore moves from doubt, to rejection, to judgment, to grace.

It shows two kinds of people:

The proud, who refuse to come.

And:

The humble and weary, who come and find rest.

The central truth of Matthew 11 is:

Jesus is the promised One whose works prove who He is, and though many reject Him, He invites all who are weary to come to Him and find rest for their souls.

I. JESUS CONTINUES HIS MINISTRY

Matthew 11:1 — Teaching and Preaching in Galilee

“After Jesus finished instructing His twelve disciples, He went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.”

This verse marks the end of Jesus' second major teaching section in Matthew.

“After Jesus finished instructing...”

Jesus had sent out the twelve.

But He did not stop working Himself.

He **went on** to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.

Jesus never asked His disciples to do anything He was not doing Himself.

Cross References

Matthew 4:23

> Jesus went everywhere in Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, telling the good news about the kingdom, and healing all the people's diseases and sicknesses.

Matthew 9:35

> Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages. He taught in their synagogues, told the good news about the kingdom, and healed every disease and sickness.

Mark 6:6

> Then Jesus went around to the other villages in that area and taught.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus leads by example.

II. JOHN IN PRISON

Matthew 11:2 — He Heard About the Works of Christ

“When John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about the works of Christ, he sent his disciples”

John the Baptist was **in prison.**

Herod Antipas had arrested him for speaking against Herod's sinful marriage.

The historian Josephus tells us John was held in a fortress called Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea.

John had lived his life in the open wilderness.

Now he was locked in a dark cell.

While there, he **heard about the works of Christ.**

His disciples were still able to visit him and bring him news.

Cross References

Matthew 4:12

> When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He went back to Galilee.

Luke 7:18

> John's followers told him about all these things. So John called two of his followers.

Mark 6:17

> Herod himself had ordered John to be arrested, chained, and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, whom Herod had married.

Spiritual Principle

Faithful servants of God sometimes suffer for doing what is right.

III. JOHN'S QUESTION

Matthew 11:3 — “Are You the One?”

“to ask Him, ‘Are You the one who is to come, or should we look for another?’”

This is a surprising question.

John had pointed to Jesus and said, **“Look, the Lamb of God!”**

He had seen the Spirit come down on Jesus.

Why would he now ask this?

John had preached that the Messiah would bring judgment.

The axe was at the root.

The chaff would be burned.

But Jesus was healing and teaching, not judging.

And John was still in prison.

Perhaps John was confused.

Perhaps he was discouraged.

Perhaps he wanted his own disciples to hear the answer from Jesus.

Whatever the reason, John did the right thing with his doubt.

He took it to Jesus.

Cross References

Luke 7:19

He sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are You the One who is to come, or should we wait for someone else?”

Malachi 3:1

“Look, I am sending My messenger, and he will prepare the road ahead of Me. Then the Lord you are looking for will suddenly come to His temple.”

John 1:29

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

Spiritual Principle

Even strong believers can struggle with doubt.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Doubt is not the opposite of faith when it drives us to Jesus for answers.

IV. GO AND TELL JOHN

Matthew 11:4 — What You Hear and See

“Jesus replied, ‘Go back and tell John what you hear and see:’”

Jesus did not give a simple yes or no.

He told John's disciples to report what they **heard** and **saw.**

Jesus pointed to the evidence.

His words and His works spoke for themselves.

Luke tells us that at that very time, Jesus healed many people while John's disciples watched.

Cross References

Luke 7:22

Jesus answered John's followers, “Go tell John what you saw and heard here.”

John 5:36

But I have a proof about Myself that is greater than John's. The work My Father gave Me to finish, the very work I am doing, shows that the Father sent Me.

Isaiah 61:1

> The Spirit of the Lord GOD is on Me, because the LORD has chosen Me to bring good news to the poor.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus answers honest doubt with clear evidence.

V. THE EVIDENCE

Matthew 11:5 — The Blind See, the Dead Are Raised

“The blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news preached to them.”

Jesus listed His works.

Each one connected to promises in Isaiah.

The blind see.

The lame walk.

The deaf hear.

The poor hear the good news.

John knew these prophecies well.

Jesus was saying, **“Look at what Isaiah said the Messiah would do. That is exactly what I am doing.”**

Notice how the list ends.

It does not end with the greatest miracle, raising the dead.

It ends with **the poor have the good news preached to them.**

The gospel reaching the poor was just as important as any miracle.

Cross References

Isaiah 35:5

> Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will hear.

Isaiah 29:18

> On that day the deaf will hear the words of a book. Out of the gloom and darkness, the blind will see.

Luke 4:18

> The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He chose Me to tell the good news to the poor. He sent Me to tell captives they are free and to tell the blind that they can see again. He sent Me to free those who are treated badly.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' works prove that He is the promised Messiah.

Key Truth

The answer to John's question was in the Scriptures John already knew.

VI. BLESSED IS THE ONE WHO DOES NOT STUMBLE

Matthew 11:6 — Not Offended by Jesus

“Blessed is anyone who does not stumble because of Me.”

Jesus added a gentle word for John.

“Blessed is anyone who does not stumble because of Me.”

To **stumble** means to be offended or to fall away.

Jesus was not the kind of Messiah many people expected.

He did not overthrow Rome.

He did not free John from prison.

He did not immediately bring judgment.

Some people would be offended by Him.

Jesus was encouraging John:

Keep trusting Me, even when I do not act the way you expected.

Cross References

Luke 7:23

> Blessed is the person who does not lose faith because of Me.

1 Peter 2:8

> And He is “a stone that causes people to stumble, a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they do not obey God's message.

Romans 9:33

> Look, I am putting in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble, a rock that makes them fall. But anyone who trusts in Him will never be disappointed.

Spiritual Principle

Blessing comes to those who keep trusting Jesus even when they do not understand His ways.

Application

We may be tempted to stumble when:

- God does not answer our prayers the way we hoped.
- We suffer even though we are faithful.
- Evil seems to be winning.
- God's timing feels slow.
- Jesus does not fit our expectations.

VII. A REED SWAYED BY THE WIND?

Matthew 11:7 — What Did You Go Out to See?

“As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind?’”

As soon as John's disciples left, Jesus defended John.

The crowd may have wondered if John had become weak.

Jesus asked them a question.

“What did you go out into the wilderness to see?”

“A reed swayed by the wind?”

Reeds grew along the Jordan River.

They bent in whatever direction the wind blew.

Jesus was saying that John was not like that.

He was not weak.

He did not change his message to please people.

He stood firm, even before a king.

Cross References

Luke 7:24

> When John's followers left, Jesus began talking to the people about John: “What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed blown by the wind?”

1 Kings 14:15

> The LORD will strike Israel so that it will shake like a reed in the water.

Ephesians 4:14

> Then we will no longer be babies. We will not be tossed back and forth by the waves or blown around by every new teaching.

Spiritual Principle

God's servants must stand firm, not bend to every wind.

Key Truth

One moment of doubt did not make John a weak man.

VIII. FINE CLOTHES?

Matthew 11:8 — Those in Kings' Palaces

“If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes live in kings' palaces.”

Jesus asked a second question.

Did they go out to see a man in fine clothes?

Of course not.

John wore camel's hair and a leather belt.

People in fine clothes lived in palaces.

There is an irony here.

John was now in a king's prison, not in a king's palace.

He was there because he would not flatter the king.

John did not live for comfort.

He lived for God.

Cross References

Luke 7:25

> What did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, people who have fine clothes and live in luxury are in kings' palaces.

James 2:2

> Suppose someone comes into your meeting wearing nice clothes and a gold ring. At the same time a poor person comes in wearing old, dirty clothes.

Matthew 6:29

> But I tell you that even Solomon, with all his riches, was not dressed as beautifully as one of these flowers.

Spiritual Principle

God's true servants are not driven by comfort or wealth.

IX. MORE THAN A PROPHET

Matthew 11:9 — Yes, I Tell You

“Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.”

Jesus asked a third question.

Did they go out to see a **prophet**?

Yes.

John was a true prophet.

The first prophet in Israel in about four hundred years.

But Jesus said he was **more than a prophet.**

The other prophets spoke about the Messiah from far away.

John pointed to Him when He was standing right there.

Cross References

Luke 7:26

> But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, and I tell you, John is more than a prophet.

Luke 1:76

> Now you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High God. You will go before the Lord to prepare His way.

Matthew 21:26

> But if we say, “It was from people,” we are afraid of the crowd, because they all believe John was a prophet.

Spiritual Principle

God honors those who faithfully point others to Jesus.

X. THE MESSENGER

Matthew 11:10 — Prepare Your Way

“This is the one about whom it is written: ‘I will send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way before You.’”

Why was John more than a prophet?

Because John himself was **the subject of prophecy.**

Malachi had promised that God would send a messenger to prepare the way.

John was that messenger.

Notice the words **“ahead of You.”**

In Malachi, God says the messenger will prepare the way **before Me.**

Here, Jesus applies it to Himself.

John prepared the way for God, and Jesus is that God.

Cross References

Malachi 3:1

> “Look, I am sending My messenger, and he will prepare the road ahead of Me. Then the Lord you are looking for will suddenly come to His temple.”

Mark 1:2

> It is written in the book of Isaiah the prophet: “Look, I am sending My messenger ahead of You. He will prepare Your way.”

Luke 7:27

> This is the one about whom it is written: “Look, I am sending My messenger ahead of You. He will prepare the way for You.”

Spiritual Principle

God's plan of salvation was prepared in every detail.

Key Truth

John prepared the way for the LORD, and the LORD was Jesus.

XI. NONE GREATER THAN JOHN

Matthew 11:11 — Yet the Least in the Kingdom Is Greater

“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.”

Jesus gave John the highest praise.

No one born of a woman was greater than John.

Greater than Abraham.

Greater than Moses.

Greater than Elijah.

Why?

Because John had the greatest privilege.

He introduced the Messiah to the world.

But then Jesus said something amazing.

“Whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

This does not mean John was not saved.

It means John stood at the end of the old age.

He pointed to the cross but did not see it.

Believers today live on the other side of the cross and the resurrection.

The least believer has a greater privilege, knowing the full story of what Jesus has done.

Cross References

Luke 7:28

> I tell you, John is greater than anyone else ever born. But even the least important person in the kingdom of God is greater than John.

Luke 1:15

> John will be a great man in the Lord's sight... He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.

Job 14:1

> All people born of women live only a few days and are full of trouble.

Spiritual Principle

The privileges of the kingdom are greater than any human greatness.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

John saw the dawn; we live in the full light of day.

XII. THE KINGDOM ADVANCING

Matthew 11:12 — Forceful People Seize It

“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful people seize it.”

This verse is one of the hardest in Matthew to understand.

Bible teachers have explained it in different ways.

First view: The kingdom is advancing powerfully, and people who are serious and eager press hard to enter it.

Second view: The kingdom has suffered violence. Violent people, like Herod who imprisoned John, try to attack it.

Both are true in Matthew's Gospel.

The kingdom was breaking into the world with power through Jesus.

At the same time, it was being opposed violently.

John was in prison.

Jesus would be crucified.

But the kingdom would not be stopped.

And those who truly want it must pursue it with their whole heart.

Cross References

Luke 16:16

> The Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets were preached until John came. Since then, the good news about the kingdom of God is being told, and everyone is trying hard to get into it.

Micah 2:12

> I will surely bring all of you together, people of Jacob. I will gather what is left of Israel. I will put them together like sheep in a pen.

Luke 13:24

> Work hard to enter through the narrow door. Many people will try to enter, but they will not be able to.

Spiritual Principle

The kingdom of God is pursued with whole-hearted effort and opposed with fierce resistance.

XIII. THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS UNTIL JOHN

Matthew 11:13 — The End of an Age

“For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John.”

The whole Old Testament pointed forward.

The Law and the Prophets were looking ahead to the coming of the Messiah.

John was the last voice of that age.

With John, the time of waiting came to an end.

With Jesus, the time of fulfillment began.

Cross References

Luke 16:16

> The Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets were preached until John came. Since then, the good news about the kingdom of God is being told, and everyone is trying hard to get into it.

Romans 3:21

> But now God has shown us a way to be made right with Him without the law. The Law and the Prophets told us about it.

Acts 3:24

> Samuel and all the prophets who came after him spoke about these days.

Spiritual Principle

The whole Old Testament points to Jesus.

XIV. JOHN IS ELIJAH

Matthew 11:14 — If You Are Willing to Accept It

“And if you are willing to accept it, John is the Elijah who was to come.”

The last words of the Old Testament promised that God would send **Elijah** before the great day of the LORD.

The Jews were waiting for Elijah.

Jesus said John was that Elijah.

John was not Elijah come back to life.

When asked, John said he was not Elijah.

But he came **in the spirit and power of Elijah**, just as the angel told his father.

Notice the words **“if you are willing to accept it.”**

Many would not accept it.

Because if John was Elijah, then Jesus was the Lord he came to prepare for.

Cross References

Malachi 4:5

> Look, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes.

Matthew 17:11

> Jesus answered, “Elijah is coming, and he will make everything the way it should be.”

Luke 1:17

> He will go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah. He will turn the hearts of fathers to their children.

Spiritual Principle

Accepting the truth often requires a willing heart.

XV. WHOEVER HAS EARS

Matthew 11:15 — Let Them Hear

“Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

Jesus often said this after an important teaching.

Everyone has ears.

But not everyone truly listens.

To **hear** in the Bible means to listen, understand, and obey.

Jesus was calling the crowd to think carefully about what He had just said.

Cross References

Matthew 13:9

> Whoever has ears should listen.

Revelation 2:7

> Whoever has ears should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

Mark 4:9

> Then Jesus said, “Whoever has ears to hear should listen.”

Spiritual Principle

Hearing God's Word must lead to understanding and obedience.

XVI. THIS GENERATION

Matthew 11:16 — Like Children in the Marketplace

“To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to others:”

Now Jesus turns to the people of His day.

He calls them **this generation.**

He compares them to **children in the marketplace.**

In those days, children played games in the town square.

Sometimes they played wedding.

Sometimes they played funeral.

Jesus describes children who are never satisfied.

Whatever game others suggest, they refuse to play.

Cross References

Luke 7:31

> What can I say about the people of this time? What are they like?

Matthew 12:41

> On the Judgment Day the people from Nineveh will stand up with the people who live now, and they will show that you are guilty. When Jonah preached to them, they changed their hearts and lives. And look, someone greater than Jonah is here.

Jeremiah 6:10

> Who can I speak to and warn? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed, so they cannot hear. The word of the LORD has become something they make fun of. They do not want to hear it.

Spiritual Principle

A heart that does not want God will always find an excuse.

XVII. WE PLAYED THE FLUTE

Matthew 11:17 — You Did Not Dance

“‘We played the flute for you, but you did not dance; we sang a dirge, but you did not mourn.’”

The children complain:

We played happy music, and you would not dance.

We played sad music, and you would not cry.

Nothing worked.

They would not respond either way.

That was this generation.

They would not respond to joy.

They would not respond to sorrow.

Cross References

Luke 7:32

> They are like children sitting in the marketplace, calling to one another, “We played music for you, but you did not dance. We sang a sad song, but you did not cry.”

Ecclesiastes 3:4

> There is a time to cry and a time to laugh. There is a time to be sad and a time to dance.

Amos 5:16

> People will cry loudly in all the public squares... They will call the farmers to come and cry, and they will pay people to sing sad songs.

Spiritual Principle

Stubborn hearts reject God no matter how He speaks.

XVIII. JOHN HAS A DEMON

Matthew 11:18 — Neither Eating Nor Drinking

“For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’”

John lived a strict life.

He ate locusts and wild honey.

He did not drink wine.

He called people to mourn over their sins.

That was the funeral song.

But the people did not mourn.

Instead, they said, **“He has a demon.”**

They called his strict life a sign that he was crazy or evil.

Cross References

Luke 7:33

> John the Baptist came and did not eat bread or drink wine, and you say, “He has a demon in him.”

Numbers 6:3

> He must not drink wine or any other strong drink.

Matthew 3:4

> John's clothes were made from camel's hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food, he ate locusts and wild honey.

Spiritual Principle

People who do not want the message will attack the messenger.

XIX. A FRIEND OF SINNERS

Matthew 11:19 — Wisdom Is Proved Right

“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 deeds.”

Jesus came with a different style.

He **ate and drank** with people.

He went to dinners.

He celebrated with sinners who repented.

That was the wedding song.

But the people did not dance.

Instead, they said, **“Here is a glutton and a drunkard.”**

This was a lie.

Jesus never sinned.

But they also said He was **“a friend of tax collectors and sinners.”**

That part was true.

And it is one of the most beautiful things ever said about Jesus.

Then Jesus said, **“Wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”**

In other words, the results will show who is right.

Changed lives would prove that both John and Jesus were sent by God.

Cross References

Luke 7:34

> The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, “Look at Him! He eats too much and drinks too much wine, and He is a friend of tax collectors and sinners!”

Matthew 9:11

> When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His followers, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

Luke 15:2

> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to complain, “This man welcomes sinners and even eats with them.”

Spiritual Principle

The fruit of a ministry proves whether it is from God.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The insult “friend of sinners” is the best news a sinner could ever hear.

XX. JESUS DENOUNCES THE TOWNS

Matthew 11:20 — They Did Not Repent

“Then Jesus began to denounce the towns where most of His miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.”

Now Jesus speaks strong words of judgment.

He **denounced** the towns where He had done **most of His miracles.**

These towns had seen more than anyone.

They saw the sick healed.

They saw demons driven out.

They saw the dead raised.

But **they did not repent.**

They were amazed.

They talked about it.

They enjoyed the miracles.

But they did not change their hearts and lives.

Cross References

Luke 10:13

> How terrible for you, Chorazin! How terrible for you, Bethsaida! If the miracles I did in you had happened in Tyre and Sidon, those people would have changed their lives long ago.

Revelation 2:5

> So remember where you were before you fell. Change your hearts and do what you did at first.

Jonah 3:5

> The people of Nineveh believed God. They announced that they would stop eating for a while, and they put on rough cloth to show how sad they were, from the most important to the least important.

Spiritual Warning

Seeing God's power without repenting brings greater judgment.

Key Truth

Miracles can amaze the mind without changing the heart.

XXI. WOE TO CHORAZIN AND BETHSAIDA

Matthew 11:21 — Tyre and Sidon Would Have Repented

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”

“Woe” is a word of sorrow and warning.

It is like saying, **“How terrible it will be for you.”**

Chorazin and **Bethsaida** were small towns near the Sea of Galilee, close to Capernaum.

Peter, Andrew, and Philip were from Bethsaida.

Tyre and Sidon were Gentile cities on the coast.

They were known for their wealth, pride, and wickedness.

The prophets had announced God's judgment on them.

But Jesus said if they had seen His miracles, they would have repented.

Sackcloth and ashes were signs of deep sorrow and repentance.

Cross References

Luke 10:13

> How terrible for you, Chorazin! How terrible for you, Bethsaida! If the miracles I did in you had happened in Tyre and Sidon, those people would have changed their lives long ago. They would have worn rough cloth and sat in ashes to show they were sorry.

Ezekiel 26:3

> So this is what the Lord GOD says: I am against you, Tyre. I will bring many nations against you, like the sea brings its waves.

Jonah 3:6

> When the king of Nineveh heard this, he got up from his throne, took off his royal robe, covered himself with rough cloth, and sat in ashes.

Spiritual Principle

God knows how every heart would respond in every situation.

XXII. MORE BEARABLE FOR TYRE AND SIDON

Matthew 11:22 — The Day of Judgment

“But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.”

Tyre and Sidon were wicked.

They would be judged.

But their judgment would be **more bearable** than the judgment on Chorazin and Bethsaida.

Why?

Because Chorazin and Bethsaida had seen so much more.

They had the Son of God walking in their streets.

And they still did not repent.

Cross References

Luke 10:14

But on the Judgment Day it will be better for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

Isaiah 23:1

This is a message about Tyre: Cry, you trading ships of Tarshish, because Tyre has been destroyed.

Ezekiel 28:2

Human, say to the ruler of Tyre: This is what the Lord GOD says: You are proud, and you say, “I am a god.”

Spiritual Principle

Greater light brings greater responsibility.

Key Truth

There are different degrees of judgment based on how much truth a person has received.

XXIII. CAPERNAUM

Matthew 11:23 — Down to Hades

“And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.”

Now Jesus speaks to **Capernaum.**

This was His own town.

His home base in Galilee.

More miracles were done there than anywhere else.

Capernaum may have been proud of being Jesus' town.

“Will you be lifted up to the heavens?”

“No, you will go down to Hades.”

Hades is the place of the dead.

Here it is a picture of complete humiliation and judgment.

Jesus said that if **Sodom** had seen these miracles, it would have repented and still be standing.

Sodom was the symbol of the worst wickedness in the Bible.

Yet Capernaum's sin was worse.

Today, Capernaum is in ruins.

Cross References

Luke 10:15

> And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to heaven? No, you will be thrown down to the place of the dead.

Isaiah 14:13

> You said to yourself, “I will go up to heaven. I will set my throne above God's stars.”

Genesis 19:24

> Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah from the LORD out of the sky.

Spiritual Warning

Being close to Jesus' works is not the same as being changed by Jesus.

XXIV. MORE BEARABLE FOR SODOM

Matthew 11:24 — A Solemn Warning

“But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

Jesus repeats the warning.

Sodom was destroyed by fire from heaven.

Yet on the day of judgment, it will be more bearable for Sodom than for Capernaum.

This is a solemn warning for anyone who has heard the gospel many times.

Growing up in church.

Hearing many sermons.

Seeing God at work.

All of this is a great privilege.

But it also brings great responsibility.

Cross References

Luke 10:12

> I tell you, on the Judgment Day it will be better for the people of Sodom than for the people of that town.

Genesis 18:20

> Then the LORD said, “I have heard many complaints against the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their sin is very great.”

2 Peter 2:6

> And God punished the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them until they were nothing but ashes. He made those cities an example of what will happen to those who are against God.

Spiritual Warning

Familiarity with Jesus can harden a heart instead of softening it.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The greatest danger is not never hearing the gospel, but hearing it again and again and never responding.

XXV. JESUS PRAISES THE FATHER

Matthew 11:25 — Revealed to Little Children

“At that time Jesus prayed, ‘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.’”

Right after speaking words of judgment, Jesus prays.

He **praises** His Father.

He calls Him **Father**, showing closeness.

He calls Him **Lord of heaven and earth**, showing His power.

Then He thanks God for something surprising.

God had **hidden** these things from **the wise and learned.**

And **revealed** them to **little children.**

The **wise and learned** were people who were proud of their knowledge.

Like the religious leaders.

The **little children** were the humble.

Like fishermen, tax collectors, and sinners who knew they needed God.

God does not reveal Himself to people because they are smart.

He reveals Himself to people who are humble.

Cross References

Luke 10:21

> Then Jesus was filled with joy by the Holy Spirit. He said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from wise and educated people and shown them to little children.”

1 Corinthians 1:27

> But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and He chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

Psalm 8:2

> You have taught children and babies to sing praises to You because of Your enemies.

Spiritual Principle

God reveals Himself to the humble, not to the proud.

Key Truth

Pride closes the door to understanding; humility opens it.

XXVI. YOUR GOOD PLEASURE

Matthew 11:26 — Yes, Father

“Yes, Father, for this was Your good pleasure.”

Jesus said **“Yes”** to the Father's way.

“This was Your good pleasure.”

It pleased God to work this way.

Jesus did not question it.

He rejoiced in it.

Even when many rejected Him, Jesus trusted the Father's plan.

Cross References

Luke 10:21

> Yes, Father, this is what You really wanted.

Ephesians 1:5

> Because of His love, God had already decided to make us His own children through Jesus Christ. That is what He wanted, and it pleased Him.

Luke 12:32

> Don't be afraid, little flock, because your Father is happy to give you the kingdom.

Spiritual Principle

Trusting God's wisdom brings peace even when we do not understand everything.

XXVII. ALL THINGS COMMITTED TO ME

Matthew 11:27 — Knowing the Father and the Son

“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.”

This is one of the greatest statements Jesus ever made about Himself.

“All things have been committed to Me by My Father.”

Jesus has been given all authority.

“No one knows the Son except the Father.”

Jesus is so great that only God fully knows Him.

“No one knows the Father except the Son.”

Jesus knows God perfectly, as only God can.

And then:

“And those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.”

The only way to truly know God is through Jesus.

Jesus is the One who opens the door.

Cross References

Luke 10:22

> My Father has given Me all things. No one knows who the Son is except the Father. And no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those whom the Son chooses to tell.

John 10:15

> I know the Father, just as the Father knows Me. I give My life for the sheep.

John 3:35

> The Father loves the Son and has given Him power over everything.

Spiritual Principle

The only way to know the Father is through the Son.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus.

XXVIII. COME TO ME

Matthew 11:28 — I Will Give You Rest

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

After words of judgment, Jesus gives words of grace.

This is one of the most loved verses in the Bible.

“Come to Me.”

Not to a religion.

Not to a set of rules.

To a Person.

“All you.”

The invitation is open to everyone.

“Who are weary and burdened.”

Weary describes people worn out from working hard.

Burdened describes people carrying a heavy load.

Many people were weighed down by the heavy rules of the Pharisees.

Many were weighed down by sin, guilt, sorrow, and hard lives.

Jesus says, **“Come.”**

“And I will give you rest.”

Rest is a gift.

It is not earned.

It is given.

Cross References

Jeremiah 31:25

> I will give rest to those who are tired, and I will satisfy those who are weak.

Isaiah 40:28

> The LORD is the God who lives forever. He created the whole world. He does not become tired or need to rest.

Exodus 33:14

> The LORD answered, “I Myself will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

Spiritual Principle

True rest is found in a Person, not a place or a program.

Key Truth

The same Jesus who warns the proud invites the weary.

Application

Jesus offers rest from:

- The weight of sin and guilt.
- The pressure to earn God's love.
- The burden of trying to be good enough.
- The exhaustion of carrying life alone.
- The fear of judgment.
- The heaviness of sorrow.

XXIX. TAKE MY YOKE

Matthew 11:29 — Learn from Me

“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.”

A **yoke** was a wooden frame placed on the necks of two animals so they could pull a load together.

In Jewish teaching, a **yoke** was also a picture of a teacher's instruction.

Rabbis spoke of taking on **the yoke of the law.**

Jesus invites us to take **His** yoke.

Rest does not mean doing nothing.

It means walking with Jesus, yoked to Him, learning from Him.

And He tells us what He is like.

“I am gentle and humble in heart.”

This is the only place in the Gospels where Jesus describes His own heart.

And of all the words He could have chosen, He chose these:

Gentle.

Humble.

The Pharisees were harsh and proud.

Jesus is gentle and humble.

“You will find rest for your souls.”

Cross References

Jeremiah 6:16

> This is what the LORD says: “Stand where the roads cross and look. Ask where the old way is, where the good way is, and walk on it. If you do, you will find rest for yourselves.”

Numbers 12:3

> Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the earth.

Philippians 2:8

> He humbled Himself and was fully obedient to God, even when that caused His death — death on a cross.

Spiritual Principle

Rest is found by walking with Jesus, not by walking away from responsibility.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When Jesus describes His own heart, He uses only two words: gentle and humble.

XXX. EASY AND LIGHT

Matthew 11:30 — My Burden Is Light

“For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”

A well-made yoke was carefully shaped to fit the animal.

It did not rub or hurt.

It made the work easier.

Some say Jesus, as a carpenter, may have made yokes Himself.

His yoke is **easy.**

The word means **well-fitting** or **kind.**

His burden is **light.**

This does not mean following Jesus is always easy.

Jesus just said in Matthew 10 that His followers would face persecution and take up a cross.

But it means that His commands are given in love.

And He carries the load with us.

The Pharisees put heavy burdens on people and did not lift a finger to help.

Jesus gives a light burden and carries it with us.

Cross References

1 John 5:3

> Loving God means obeying His commands. And His commands are not too hard for us.

Matthew 23:4

> They make strict rules and try to force people to obey them, but they are not willing to help those who struggle under the weight of their rules.

Acts 15:10

> So now why are you testing God by putting a heavy load around the necks of the believers? It is a load that neither we nor our ancestors were able to carry.

Spiritual Principle

Following Jesus is not a heavy weight but a gentle partnership.

Key Truth

Man-made religion adds burdens.

Jesus lifts them.

XXXI. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM MATTHEW 11

1. Faith Is Tested in Hardship

Even John the Baptist questioned Jesus, yet Christ confirmed His mission through works of power and mercy.

Principle:

Bring your doubts to Jesus, and let Him answer them with His Word and His works.

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2. John Was Great, Yet Christ's Kingdom Is Greater

Spiritual inheritance in the kingdom surpasses even the highest human honor.

Principle:

The smallest place in God's kingdom is greater than the highest place in this world.

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3. This Generation Rejected Both John and Jesus

Unbelief finds excuses whether God speaks through austerity or fellowship.

Principle:

An unwilling heart will always find a reason to reject God.

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4. Judgment Falls on the Unrepentant

Greater revelation brings greater responsibility.

Rejected light brings heavier judgment.

Principle:

The more we have heard, the more we are responsible to respond.

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5. God Reveals Truth to the Humble

Spiritual understanding is given to the childlike, not the proud.

Principle:

Humility is the doorway to knowing God.

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6. Jesus Offers True Rest

In a world of burdens, only Christ gives peace for the soul through surrender to His gentle lordship.

Principle:

Rest is not found by escaping Jesus' yoke but by taking it.

XXXII. WHEN GOD DOES NOT DO WHAT WE EXPECT

John the Baptist's question teaches us how to handle doubt.

John Was in a Hard Place

He was in prison for doing what was right.

John Had Expectations

He expected the Messiah to bring judgment quickly.

John Took His Questions to Jesus

He did not walk away from Jesus.

He asked Jesus.

Jesus Answered with Evidence

He pointed to His works and to Scripture.

Jesus Did Not Condemn John

Right after John's question, Jesus praised him publicly.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Jesus is patient with honest doubt, and He answers it with truth.

XXXIII. TWO RESPONSES TO JESUS

Matthew 11 shows two very different kinds of people.

The Proud

- The generation that rejected John and Jesus.
- The towns that saw miracles but did not repent.
- The wise and learned who could not see.

The Humble

- John, who brought his doubts to Jesus.
- The little children to whom God reveals the truth.
- The weary and burdened who come to Jesus for rest.

Key Truth

Pride keeps people from coming to Jesus; humility brings them to Him.

XXXIV. WHAT MATTHEW 11 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Matthew 11 presents Jesus as:

The One Who Is to Come

He is the promised Messiah.

The Fulfillment of Isaiah

His works match the prophecies.

The LORD Whose Way Was Prepared

John prepared the way for Him.

The Friend of Sinners

He welcomes those who repent.

The Judge

He warns the unrepentant.

The Son Who Knows the Father

Only He can reveal God fully.

The One Who Gives Rest

He invites the weary to come.

The Gentle and Humble Teacher

His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Jesus who has all authority is the Jesus with a gentle and humble heart.

XXXV. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why did John the Baptist ask if Jesus was the one who was to come?

John was in prison and may have been discouraged.

He had preached that the Messiah would bring judgment, but Jesus was healing and teaching.

Jesus was not acting the way John expected.

So John took his question to Jesus.

Question 2

How did Jesus answer John's question?

He pointed to His works.

The blind see, the lame walk, the dead are raised, and the poor hear the good news.

These were the very things Isaiah said the Messiah would do.

Question 3

What did Jesus mean by “Blessed is anyone who does not stumble because of Me”?

He meant that those who keep trusting Him, even when He does not act as they expect, will be blessed.

Some people would be offended by the kind of Messiah Jesus was.

Question 4

What did Jesus say about John to the crowd?

He said John was not a weak reed or a man of luxury.

He was a prophet and more than a prophet.

He was the messenger Malachi promised, and the Elijah who was to come.

Question 5

How can John be the greatest, yet the least in the kingdom be greater than he?

John had the greatest privilege of anyone before Jesus.

But he stood at the end of the old age and did not see the cross and resurrection.

Believers today have the greater privilege of knowing the full story of what Jesus has done.

Question 6

Was John the Baptist really Elijah?

John was not Elijah come back to life.

But he came in the spirit and power of Elijah, fulfilling the promise of Malachi 4:5.

Question 7

What did Jesus mean by comparing His generation to children in the marketplace?

They were like children who would not play any game.

They rejected John because he was too strict.

They rejected Jesus because He ate with sinners.

Nothing would satisfy them.

Question 8

Why did Jesus denounce Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum?

They had seen most of His miracles but did not repent.

Their judgment would be worse than the judgment on Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom.

Question 9

Why would it be more bearable for Sodom than for Capernaum?

Because Capernaum had much greater light.

The Son of God lived there and did many miracles.

Greater light brings greater responsibility.

Question 10

What did Jesus mean by hiding things from the wise and revealing them to little children?

God does not reveal Himself to people who are proud of their own wisdom.

He reveals Himself to the humble, who come to Him like children.

Question 11

How can we know God the Father?

Only through Jesus.

No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son reveals Him.

Question 12

What does Jesus mean by “Take My yoke upon you”?

A yoke was a picture of a teacher's instruction and of working together.

Jesus invites us to walk with Him, learn from Him, and follow His way.

Question 13

How is Jesus' yoke easy and His burden light?

His commands are given in love.

He walks with us and helps carry the load.

Unlike the heavy rules of the Pharisees, His way brings rest to the soul.

Question 14

What should Matthew 11 change about the way Christians live today?

Matthew 11 should cause believers to live:

- Bringing their doubts honestly to Jesus.
- Trusting Him when He does not act as expected.
- Standing firm like John.
- Grateful for the privileges of the kingdom.
- Responding to God's Word instead of making excuses.
- Taking seriously the responsibility of hearing the gospel.
- Humble like little children.
- Coming to Jesus for rest.
- Walking with Him under His gentle yoke.

XXXVI. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Matthew 11 asks several important questions.

Do I Bring My Doubts to Jesus or Run from Him?

Am I Stumbling Because Jesus Has Not Done What I Expected?

Am I a Reed Swayed by the Wind, or Do I Stand Firm?

Do I Appreciate the Privilege of Living After the Cross?

Am I Making Excuses to Avoid Responding to God?

Have I Heard the Gospel Many Times Without Truly Repenting?

Am I Proud of My Own Wisdom, or Humble Like a Child?

Do I Truly Know the Father Through the Son?

What Burdens Am I Carrying That I Need to Bring to Jesus?

Am I Walking with Jesus Under His Yoke, or Trying to Carry Life Alone?

XXXVII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Come to Me”

Matthew 11 is full of people who would not come.

The generation that would not dance or mourn.

The towns that saw miracles and would not repent.

The wise and learned who could not see.

They were close to Jesus.

They heard Him.

They saw Him.

But they did not come to Him.

Then, at the end of the chapter, Jesus opens His arms wide.

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened.”

He does not say, **“Come when you are strong.”**

He does not say, **“Come when you have it all figured out.”**

He does not say, **“Come when you have cleaned yourself up.”**

He says, **“Come.”**

This creates a powerful principle.

The people who receive rest are not the strongest or the smartest.

They are the ones who come.

Principle:

Rest is not found by those who are close to Jesus, but by those who come to Jesus.

XXXVIII. FINAL APPLICATION

Matthew Chapter 11 begins in a prison cell.

A faithful man sits in the dark.

He has given his life for God.

And he wonders.

“Are You the One?”

Jesus does not scold him.

He sends back the answer:

Look at what I am doing.

The blind see.

The lame walk.

The dead are raised.

The poor hear good news.

Then Jesus honors His servant.

No one born of a woman was greater than John.

But the chapter darkens.

A generation refuses to listen.

Towns that saw the most miracles refuse to repent.

Judgment is coming.

And then, like light breaking through a storm, Jesus speaks words of grace.

“Come to Me.”

Matthew 11 therefore reminds us:

Doubt is not the end of faith if it leads us to Jesus.

Privilege is not the same as repentance.

God hides Himself from the proud and reveals Himself to the humble.

And Jesus still opens His arms to the weary.

The rest Jesus gives does not come from:

Religious knowledge.

Seeing miracles.

Or carrying heavy rules.

It comes from:

Coming to Him.

Taking His yoke.

Learning from His gentle and humble heart.

The same invitation still stands:

Bring your doubts to Him.

Do not stumble over His ways.

Repent while there is time.

Come like a little child.

Come weary.

Come burdened.

Come to Jesus.

And until He returns:

Keep coming.

Keep learning.

Keep walking with Him.

Keep resting in Him.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Jesus, the One who was to come.

Thank You that we do not need to look for another.

Lord Jesus, when we are in dark places, help us remember who You are.

When we have doubts, help us bring them to You.

Thank You for being patient with honest questions.

Keep us from stumbling when You do not do what we expected.

Help us trust Your ways, even when we do not understand them.

Make us strong like John, not reeds blown by every wind.

Thank You for the great privilege of living after the cross and the empty tomb.

Forgive us for the times we have made excuses instead of responding to You.

Keep our hearts soft so that we do not grow hard by hearing Your Word without obeying it.

Give us repentant hearts.

Father, thank You that You reveal Yourself to the humble.

Take away our pride.

Make us like little children before You.

Thank You that we can know You through Your Son.

Lord Jesus, we hear Your invitation.

We are weary.

We are burdened.

We come to You now.

Give us rest for our souls.

Teach us to take Your yoke and learn from You.

Thank You for Your gentle and humble heart.

Thank You that Your yoke is easy and Your burden is light.

Help us walk with You every day.

And help us invite other weary people to come to You too.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” — Matthew 11:28

Central Truth

Jesus is the promised One whose works prove who He is, and though many reject Him, He invites all who are weary to come to Him and find rest for their souls.

Matthew 11 in One Sentence

Jesus answers John's doubt with the evidence of His works, honors John as the greatest of the prophets, warns a stubborn generation and unrepentant towns of judgment, praises the Father for revealing truth to the humble, and invites all who are weary to come to Him for rest.