MATTHEW 11

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

* Verse 1
  + I love that Jesus is not only a mentor but a practitioner in the mission given to His Apostles.
  + If you remember, in the last chapter, Jesus sent His Apostles out to preach the coming of the Kingdom
    - He warned them about persecution
    - He fortified their faith with promises from God
  + Instead of sitting around and watching His disciples work, Jesus also goes into the nearby cities to preach the coming of the Kingdom.

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

Mat 11:3 - and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?”

Mat 11:4 - And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see:

Mat 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.

Mat 11:6 - And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

* Verses 2-5
  + John had been in prison since chapter 4, verse 12.
    - Perhaps in that time some doubt began to creep into his mind
    - He sends his followers to ask Jesus if He is indeed the prophesied Messiah.
      * That can be a bit confusing to the reader because in chapter 3, John seemed to acknowledge Jesus’ identity and even heard the voice from Heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (3:17).
      * Why is John no longer confident.
      * I think the answer can be found in John’s circumstances.
        + It is one thing to intellectually acknowledge a fact, especially when things are going alright in your life.
        + But difficulty and hardship test us, discourage us, and introduce doubts into once strongly affirmed convictions.
        + We don’t know how long John had been in prison, but it may have been the case that his tough circumstances led him to doubt
      * He sent His disciples to Jesus to confirm what he thought he knew.
  + I like the way Jesus responds to John
    - He doesn’t reprimand him for doubting
    - He doesn’t say, “John just needs to have more faith!”
    - He points him to the evidence
      * Jesus was preaching the coming of the Kingdom
      * Jesus had visibly verifiable divine power
      * He could provide the evidence to back up His claims.
      * APPLICATION:
        + Sometimes facts and hard evidence can be the most comforting thing to a person with shaken faith.
        + Many people view facts as cold and impersonal
        + But I find that when I am emotionally a mess, sometimes what I need to right my mind is a reminder of the evidence.

Evidence that God exists

Evidence that Jesus really died for me

Evidence that the Bible can be verified

* + - * + This is why study in apologetics can be valuable.
        + It is not wrong to have doubts

When we do, I think God encourages us to look in the same direction He pointed John, to the evidence

We don’t serve a God who is afraid of being fact-checked

* Verse 6
  + Many find offense rather than salvation in the words of Jesus.
  + Instead of making Him a foundation, a rock, on which to build their lives they stumble over Him and curse Him for being in their way.
  + There were many who had witnessed the same miracles He used as evidence for John and still rejected Him because of some “offense.”
    - Maybe they didn’t like the way He looked
    - Rejected Him because of His background
    - His teaching stepped on their toes
    - He wasn’t the Messiah they had dreamed up in their mind
  + Offense: annoyance or resentment brought about by a perceived insult to or disregard for oneself or one's standards or principles.
  + Some people can reject the most clear conclusion of evidence when they find it “offensive” to their principles.
    - 2 truths prevent many people from accepting Christ
      * (1) There is a God greater than ourselves.
      * (2) His principles are more important than mine.
    - A neglect of these truths permits “liberal” doctrinal decisions in many Christian churches.
    - They take offense at a particular teaching of Christ.
    - It violates their personal principles.
    - So they deny the true Christ and His true teaching on a particular matter and establish the rule based on their principles.
    - They reinterpret Christ to align with their principles.
  + People can reject what is obvious and spin their own narrative if they find its implications undesirable.
  + I think one of the best examples of this is creation.
    - Whether the reject God’s existence because of the implications.
    - Or they take offense at God because He has been represented as the “uneducated” position and they don’t want to be put in that camp.
  + People reject clear evidence of design because the implications demand adjustment to “one’s standards or principles.”

Mat 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?

Mat 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.

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

Mat 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.”

* Verse 7-8
  + When the disciples of John turned away, Jesus turned to the audience who overheard their exchange.
  + What had they seen in the wilderness?
    - “A reed shaken by the wind?”
      * Answer: No!
      * If you’ve ever been in a marsh with reeds or a field with tall grass and the wind was blowing steadily, you will have observed the reeds/grass bending to the will of the wind.
      * John wasn’t a fickle man who shifted to appease the ever changing pressures of 1st Century pop-culture. He was God’s man, carrying a timeless message.
        + Later in Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians, He encourages them not to be pushed around by the winds of doctrines
        + Eph 4:14 - so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.
      * Perhaps after hearing John’s question, some of the people were tempted to see John as fickle.
    - “A man dressed in soft clothing?”
      * Answer: No!
      * They went out in the wilderness to see a man who endured the hardships of the Old Testament Prophets.
        + The prophets of old often taught unpopular messages to rebellious people
        + They, like John, were not reeds shaken in the wind.
        + That unwavering nature did not allow them to play politics with those in authority or win them comfort and ease by tickling people’s ears.
      * All that the prophets had foretold had come to pass or would come to pass and here Jesus affirms the words and work of John by elevating him above the prophets (verse 11).
      * The prophets of the Old Testament days had long desired to see the Messiah John was now privileged to announce!
* Verse 9-10
  + A prophet was any individual who delivered God’s message to man.
  + John was more than a prophet among many, he filled a role that had been prophesied about.
    - John was sent to announce the coming of the Messiah and “prepare” the way.
    - Jesus quoted the prophecy referring to John (Mal 3:1; 4:5, see also Luke 1:17)
      * Mal 3:1  “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare 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.
      * Mal 4:5  “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

Mat 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.

Mat 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.

Mat 11:13  For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John,

Mat 11:14  and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

Verse 11

* In my understanding, John was not the greatest servant of God because of he was less sinful than any one, or more steadfast than anyone else, or performed more good works than anyone else, but because of his elevated role. He was greater than others because of the position in which God placed him.
  + The Jews had waited on the Messiah for centuries
  + John is selected to the privileged position of being the herald of the King.
* In the same way, those of us who are privileged to be part of the Kingdom of Heaven are not greater than John because we are less sinful, more steadfast, do more good works than John, but because of the honor of receiving the blessing of association with the Son of God.

Verse 12

* Full disclosure, I find this verse difficult to understand due to the word “violent.”
* Traditional definition of violent: “*using or involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something*.” (Oxford).
  + I can’t make sense of this verse using that definition
  + What violence had been done to the Kingdom between the beginning of John’s ministry and Jesus saying these words?
  + What violent people came and took the Kingdom “by force?”
* Alternative definition of violent when used as an adjective: “*very strong or powerful*” (Oxford).
* Example Sentences:
  + “He didn’t feel well and ran to the bathroom where he became violently sick.”
  + “She didn’t extend her hand but met her gaze with a glare of violent disdain.”
  + “It gets violently cold during the Nova Scotia winter.”
  + “He hadn’t drunk in 3 years but tonight he was drunk with violent passion.”
  + Mat 8:32 - And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. (KJV)
* The Greek word translated “suffered violence” is only used one other time in the New Testament in a very similar verse.
  + Luk 16:16 - “The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and **everyone forces his way into it.**
  + It is the word here translated “forces.”
* So my best understanding of this statement is paraphrased as follows: “Since John started preaching, the Kingdom of Heaven has been the object of violent and intense interest and multitudes of people have vigorously pressed to be a part of it and “take” part in it (take it for themselves, lay claim to it, snatch it up)”
* Like black Friday shoppers rushing violently into a store to lay claim on the best TV deal.
* This makes sense in light of the multitudes who gathered and probably often jostled to hear John and Jesus or to receive healing.

Verse 13-14

* All of the cherished prophets of the old testament pointed to the time in which they were currently living (1st Century).
* Their words pointed to John and the Christ who followed Him.
* Jesus calls the people to accept that Malachi had foretold the coming of “Elijah” and that John was that “Elijah” (Mal 4:5).
  + John came bearing a strong resemblance to Elijah
  + He possessed the “spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17).
  + This may have been difficult for the Jews to understand because their scribes appear to have taught a literal/physical return of the prophet Elijah.
  + Mat 16:14 – And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”
  + Mat 17:10 – And the disciples asked him, “Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?”
* If Jesus was presenting a new way to think about the “Elijah who is to come” to the Jews, it makes sense that He then encourages them to have open ears to be taught.
* APPLICATION:
  + There is a good lesson here about ridged perspective in Bible reading.
  + We need to have an open mind to approach a scripture from more than just one angle.
    - We obviously still need to make sure those angles are valid and biblically sound.
    - But sometimes we limit the way we look at a Scripture, not because the Bible limits the passage, but because of some theological bias or our religious upbringing.
    - Just like the scribes may have encouraged ridged thinking in Mat 11:17
  + A mind open to different perspectives is open to God’s instruction through the word no matter where it leads.

Mat 11:15  He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Mat 11:16 - “But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates,

Mat 11:17 - “‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’

Mat 11:18 - For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’

Mat 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.”

Verse 15-19

* Jesus addresses “this generation,” specifically targeting those Jews who rejected John and Himself.
* He says that they would not be satisfied or accepting of the message from Heaven no matter who brought it or what the messenger looked like.
  + He compares them to children playing with their companions
    - Some of the children thought their playmates would enjoy a happy tune and so they played one on their flute.
    - But their playmates didn’t respond.
    - Assuming they must be in a sorrowful mood, the children changed the happy tune to a dirge
    - Dirge: a mournful song, piece of music, or poem.
    - But their playmates didn’t respond to that either.
  + With similar variety, John and Jesus had presented differently.
    - John preached the gospel while lived apart from people, in an uncomfortable wilderness, and without an abundance of food.
    - Jesus preached the gospel while living among people, living in town, and being willing to eat in people’s homes if invited.
    - But some rebellious Jews rejected the gospel preached by both.
    - They weren’t open to the message no matter where it came from and what the messenger looked like.
    - They mocked John as having a “demon” (Probably saying he was a crazy person)
    - And they accused Jesus of associating with sinners when He dined.
  + APPLICATION:
    - Some people aren’t interested in truth no matter how it is presented.
    - No approach will be effective if you aren’t telling them what they want to hear.
    - Truth is not their greatest priority.
      * True for non-believers.
      * True for religious people and religious bias.
  + APPLICATION:
    - If someone wants to reject God and the good news God sent into the world, they will always be able to find some “reason” to do it.
    - It doesn’t even need to be a good reason, just “good enough” for them.
    - We need to find those who have “ears to hear”
    - We’ve all met people whose ears aren’t for listening, right?
      * The person who isn’t interested in actually hearing what is being said, only in responding.
      * The person who assumes they already know what you are about to tell them.
      * A person whose ears are hardened to certain messages because of past experiences.
    - Jesus didn’t spend all his time with those who weren’t open to hearing
    - We need to pray for people’s ears to be open and search out those who are ready to listen.
* Make sure not to skip over Jesus’ last statement in verse 19, “Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.”
  + I think what He is saying here is that the truth of His and John’s message shouldn’t be evaluated by picking apart the outward appearance of the messenger, but by an examination of the messengers actions and life (deeds).
  + The Jews denied John and Jesus because of their outer appearance.
  + But Matthew, in his gospel, has already begun making the case that Jesus’ life was completely consistent with everything the Messiah was supposed to be.
  + As eyewitnesses, the Jews to whom Jesus was speaking would have been able to observe the life, miracles, and teachings of Jesus and conclude that His life was evidence that He possessed true “wisdom.”
  + APPLICATIONS:
    - Sometimes we look at our lives and they aren't turning out the way that we thought they would.
    - Outwardly they are not what we had dreamed up.
    - But as long as we are faithful to God we can be confident that, through His actions and deeds, He will reveal He has the true wisdom!
    - God has confirmed His wisdom through His deeds in our personal lives and in His work throughout time.
    - Better to live a life guided by the wisdom of God that doesn’t turn out the way we expected, than to live a life guided on human wisdom that looks exactly like what we wanted.
      * How often do we think we know who God wants us to be just like these Jews thought they knew who God’s Messiah was going to be.
      * What they needed to do was open their ears and hearts to God’s wisdom.
      * Not resist God, believing they knew better!

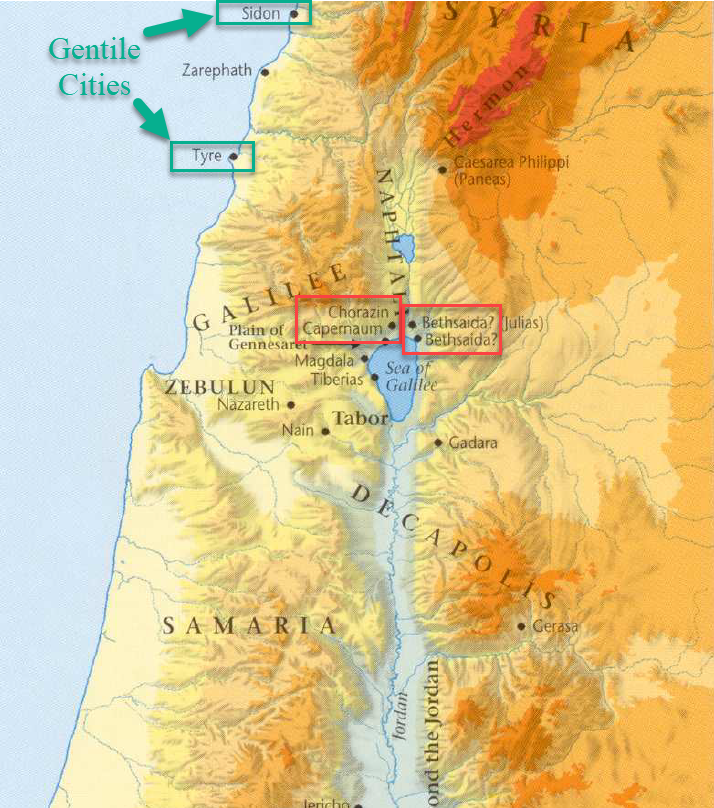
Mat 11:20 - Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent.

Mat 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.

Mat 11:22 - But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

Mat 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.

Mat 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.”



Verse 20-22

* The Jews weren’t satisfied with anything and Jesus now gives His sternest rebuke yet recorded in Matthews gospel.
* He specifically targets the towns around Galilee.
  + These towns had the unique privilege of witnessing more of Jesus’ miracles and hearing more of Jesus words than any others in the area.
  + If anyone had seen sufficient evidence, it was them.
  + Yet they rejected Messiah.
* Chorazin and Bethsaida are condemned first and Jesus says that their judgement will be worse than cities like Tyre and Sidon.
* Tyre and Sidon (green squares above) were gentile cities. Their inhabitants weren’t looking for a Messiah but Jesus says they would have repented of their sins and turned to God if the same miracles had been performed there.

Verse 23-24

* In what appears to be an even sterner rebuke, Jesus then denounced Capernaum, His place of residence.
* They had probably witnessed even more miracles and heard more preaching than Chorizan and Bethsaida.
* He sets their judgement up against a city notorious for wickedness, Sodom.
  + Gen 13:13 – Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.
  + Even Sodom would have repented if they had witnessed the work going on in Capernaum.
* Because of their obstinance, Capernaum would receive an even harsher punishment than one of the most wicked cities in history.
* APPLICATION:
  + Jesus condemns those who received a greater revelation of God and still persisted in rebellion.
  + This condemnation should be seriously considered by all of us who live in a time when the redemption of God has been fully revealed.
  + Those of us who are privileged to understand the redeeming work of God in its fullness may also be judged more harshly if we choose to turn away.

Mat 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;

Mat 11:26 - yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

Mat 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.

Mat 11:28 - Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Mat 11:29 - 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.

Mat 11:30 - For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Verse 25-26

* After His condemnation of the cities, Jesus makes the statement found in verse 25.
  + It is directed at God rather than at a surrounding audience.
  + It is a statement of thanks for the way God had designed the gospel.
  + The simplicity and humility of the gospel message is hidden in plain sight from those who believe themselves to be too wise to accept it.
    - The Scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees, all believed themselves too sophisticated for the simple preaching of the Jew from Nazareth.
    - They expected a Savior with a little more flourish, a little more formal training, a little more like them.
    - When they didn’t get it, they told John he was just a crazy man with a demon and Jesus He was a drunkard who didn’t know anything about the Jewish God.
  + Jesus is not using “wise” and “understanding” to refer to genuine wisdom and insight.
    - If they had genuinely been wise and understanding they would have looked at Jesus’ deeds and accepted heavenly wisdom (11:19).
    - Jesus uses these terms in a sarcastic way (although without humor).
    - They genuinely believed themselves wise but they were genuinely fools.
  + APPLICATION:
    - If you fancy yourself wise but are not open to being taught, you are not wise.
    - If you already believe you know everything there is to know about a particular subject and aren’t willing to take input from any other source, you may be terribly mistaken about what you think you know.
    - The Jewish elite had spent a lifetime studying their “law” and they were terribly misguided as to its true meaning.
    - You can be extremely educated and unwise.
  + Jesus’ use of the term “little children” is referring to those who in simplicity, humility, and openness accept the gospel message with pure teachable hearts.
  + Jesus’ words here remind me of Paul’s in 1 Corinthians 1.
    - 1Co 1:26-29 - For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

Verse 27-30

* It wasn’t the “wise” and “understanding” that could show the people the Father.
  + They didn’t even know the Father
  + They didn’t know His heart or His character.
* The work of making the Father know to the world was given to Christ.
* His deeds manifested the wisdom of the Father and those who came to Him like little children could learn from Him.
* One of the things they would learn was that Christ and the Father were kind Masters.
  + They were not like the taskmaster Jewish elite who gave their fellow Jews burdens too heavy to bear.
  + Mat 23:4 - They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. (*speaking to scribes and Pharisees*)
  + Unlike these, Jesus was preparing Himself to bear the heaviest burden so we could be relieved of the weight of our sin.
* In accomplishing this for us, He would reveal Himself and the Father to a Jewish world who didn’t know Him and ultimately a gentile world who would learn about Him for the first time.
* Contrast the actions, or the lack of action, of the Pharisees and scribes with Jesus’ statement “learn from me.”
  + Jesus was going to make their “yoke” light by doing the heavy lifting.
  + He was going to sacrifice to bring them to God.
  + But the Pharisees wouldn’t help the people move their burdens with even a “finger.”
* All of the oppressed were invited to come to Jesus for relief.
* 

APPLICATION:

* When we communicate the nature of the Father to someone else, do we teach them like the Pharisees or like the Son of God?
* Do we preach about the sacrifices, crosses, and burdens that people need to bear? Do we preach condemnation on those who fail to bear those burdens correctly? People who aren’t doing it right! People who need to get their lives together and come out of sin!
* But we aren’t willing to help them bear those burdens?
* We don’t spend our time bearing burdens that aren’t ours?
* Whose interpretation of the Father are we preaching?
  + Jesus’?
  + The Jewish Leaders’?
* The Jewish leaders said, “Learn from me! I will **tell you** how to be right with God!”
* Jesus said, “Learn from me! I will **help you** be right with God!”
* Is it fair to say we ought not preach the gospel if we aren’t ready to help bear the burdens of those we teach?
* Is it fair to say we don’t know the Father if we preach a gospel that doesn’t compel us to bear one another’s burdens?