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## Matthew 11

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Matthew 11.

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### Topics.

- John the Baptist is in prison.
- What shall I compare this generation?
- Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida.
- God has hidden these things from the wise and understanding.
- Come to me and I will give you rest.

**The Previous Chapter:** in the previous chapter Jesus called his twelve apostles and told them to find a house in the place they visit and use it as a base station to proclaim the Gospel to that region. He spoke about two sparrows; children rising against parents; religious leaders calling him Beelzebul; about hell (gehenna). He told the disciples whoever does not take their cross and follow him is not worthy of him and that whoever receives a disciple receives him and whoever receives a prophet receives a prophet's reward and whoever gives a cup of cold water will also receive a reward.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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### MATTHEW 11:1-6

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### John the Baptist is in Prison.

- **Matthew 11:1-6:** <sup>1</sup>When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities. <sup>2</sup>Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples <sup>3</sup>and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" <sup>4</sup>And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>And *blessed is the one who is not offended by me.*"

John is in prison and it seems he is beginning to have doubts about Jesus, this is not difficult to understand. John has been faithfully doing the work of God and of Christ proclaiming the coming Messiah, and yet he is taken captive and thrown in prison. Many who become Christians can experience a similar thing, especially when they have laid down their life to faithfully serve the Lord and a crisis of some kind comes into their life, suddenly they can begin to doubt their faith as John is doing while in prison. Jesus assures and comforts John by telling him, "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news preached to them and blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

John knowing the Old Testament Scriptures as they had been recorded on scrolls upon hearing the words of Jesus, "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear and the dead are raised up (v5) would have immediately thought of the many Old Testament Scriptures similar to the following ones that echo the coming Messiah and the Christ.

- The LORD opens the eyes of the *blind*. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous (Psalm 146:8).

- In that day the *deaf* shall hear the words of a book and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the *blind* shall see. The meek shall obtain *fresh joy* in the LORD, and the *POOR* among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 29:18-19).
- The eyes of the *blind* shall be opened, and the ears of the *deaf* unstopped; then shall the *lame* man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the *mute* sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert (Isaiah 35:5-6).
- Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him to *open* the *eyes* that are *blind*, to bring out the *prisoners* from the dungeon, from the *prison* those who sit in darkness (Isaiah 42:1, 7).
- The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me (echoing Jesus) because the LORD has anointed me to bring *Good News* to the *poor*, he has sent me to *blind* up the *brokenhearted* to proclaim *liberty* to the captives, and the *opening* of the *prison* to those who are bound; <sup>2</sup>to proclaim the *year* of the LORD'S *favour* and the day of *vengeance* of our God; to comfort all who mourn (Isaiah 61:1-2) (Jesus cites this in Luke 4:18-20).
- In that day, declares the LORD, I will assemble the *lame* and gather those who have been driven away and those whom I have *afflicted* and the *lame* I will make the remnant, and those who were *cast off* a strong nation; and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore (Micah 4:6-7).
- Behold, at that time I will deal with all your *oppressors*. And I will save the *lame* and gather the *outcast* and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth (Zeph. 3:19).

Though some of these verses apply to Israel's deliverance from their seventy year captivity in Babylonian and their triumphant return to Jerusalem and the perfect fulfilment of some will be not be fulfilled until Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth they all echo Christ's appearing on earth. This is clear because Jesus is the Holy One of God and did open the eyes of the blind, healed the deaf and the lame and the joy of those that were oppressed by the religious leaders were set free from the bondage of their religious and legalistic rule and strictly adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions. All of these Old Testament writings had been preserved on scrolls, it is certain John the Baptist would have read them many times and also known that Isaiah predicted that the Lord:

- Would become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and many would stumble on it and fall and be broken and snared and taken (Isaiah 8:14-15).

Jesus by saying, "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have Good News preached to them and the one who is not offended by Jesus is blessed" (Matt. 11:6) is assuring John that he is the:

- The promised seed of (Gen. 3:15).
- The prophet Moses said was to come like him.
- The promised seed of Abraham.
- The Promised seed of David.
- The one the prophets said was to come.
- The one the Old Testament Scriptures speak of.

Added to all this John would have clearly known that only a man with God's favour and full of God's Spirit without any limitation could raise the dead and do the miracles and wonders Jesus did. The wonders and amazing healing miracles of Jesus were to authenticate that he was the Messiah the Christ the Old Testament Scriptures spoke of and the Son of God loved by God and filled with God's Spirit.

**The One who is Least in the Kingdom is Greater than John the Baptist.**

- **Matthew 11:7-11:** 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? <sup>8</sup>What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. <sup>9</sup>What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup>This is he of whom it is written, " 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you (see John chapter 1:1-14). <sup>11</sup>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.

John never did any miracles, yet he is considered the greatest prophet this is because it was John who was privileged with the message "Prepare the way of the Lord" (Luke 3:4) all other prophets spoke of the coming Messiah, but John actually introduced Christ to the world, this is why he is considered the greatest of all prophets.

**The one who is least in the Kingdom:** means the one who is considered the least in the Kingdom it is Jesus who is considered the least. The religious leaders, the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes considered Jesus to be born of fornication because of the virgin birth (they knew Jesus was born out of wedlock) added to this they considered Jesus a blasphemer and false prophet, it is Jesus Christ who is the one considered the least in the kingdom of God. Jesus is saying, John is the greatest prophet of all, but he is greater than John.

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**MATTHEW 11:12-15**

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**From John the Baptist until now the violent take the Kingdom by Force.**

- **Matthew 11:12-15:** From (or up to) the days of John the Baptist until now (the time of Christ) the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent (aggressive) take it by force. <sup>13</sup>For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, <sup>14</sup>and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. <sup>15</sup>He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

During the Old Testament era the Promised Land (the Kingdom of God) was taken by war and Israel had to constantly go to battle to maintain it.

**John is Elijah who is to Come:** Jesus says John the Baptist is the Elijah that was to come this does not mean John was Elijah, but that he was a type of Elijah or of the same spirit as Elijah in that Elijah accused the LORD'S leaders of being troublemakers to Israel because they had abandoned the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. He gathered the prophets of Israel and said:

- How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him (1 Kings 18:17-21).

Then Elijah said to the people:

- I, only, am left a prophet of the LORD (1 Kings 18:22).

Elijah prophesied against the leaders of Israel and called God's people to turn from their rebellion, forsake their wicked ways and repentant. John came with the same message, saying:

- Prepare yourself for the coming Christ and show fruit in keeping with repentance (Matthew 3:8).

The religious leaders of John's day like the religious leaders of Elijah's day had forsaken the ways of the LORD and in turn lead the people of Israel astray. No-doubt John felt as Elijah did that, he was the only prophet who was faithfully following the LORD and doing His will.

**He who has ears to hear, let him hear:** (v15) means those that have a right heart attitude will perceive that Jesus is saying he is Israel's Messiah, the Christ that the Old Testament prophesied was to come and the way into God's Kingdom and that it is not through wars and fighting for our faith the we enter the Kingdom, but by showing fruit in keeping with repentance and following Christ even unto death.

**NOTICE:** Matthew records Jesus saying the Kingdom of heaven has suffered violence (Matt. 11:12) referring to the Kingdom of God on earth up to the time of John the Baptist, thus the term the Kingdom of heaven does not refer to a Kingdom in heaven, but God's Kingdom on earth. Matthew is the only writer that use the term Kingdom of Heaven, both Mark and Luke say, the Kingdom of God. Each writer is referring to the same Kingdom which is God's Kingdom on earth, not one in heaven.

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## MATTHEW 11:16-19

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### What shall I compare this Generation?

- **Matthew 11:16-19:** "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates, <sup>17</sup>"We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.' <sup>18</sup>For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they (the Pharisees, priest and scribes) say, 'He has a demon. <sup>19</sup>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."

**The children:** represent the common people of Israel.

**The children's playmates:** represent the Pharisees, priest and scribes.

Jesus is saying the common folk (children) are sitting in the market place contrasted to the Pharisees, chief priest and scribes (the playmates) who are in the temple of God. The common folk are saying to the Pharisees, chief priest and scribes we gave you the message of Christ, but you did not receive him, we told you to repent, but you did not feel any sorrow, confirming what Jesus said in verse sixteen and verse seventeen. The religious leaders, the Pharisees, chief priest and scribes saw the common folk as unclean and because John and Jesus ate and drank with the common folk the Pharisees, chief priest and scribes considered John and Jesus were also sinners and even worse they believed them to be demon possessed.

**Wisdom is justified by her deeds:** means a changed life manifesting good works, deeds, and an honest and godly lifestyle contrasted with the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, chief priest and scribes justifies God's and Jesus Christ's wisdom and the reality of who Jesus Christ is.

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## MATTHEW 11:20-22

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### Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida.

- **Matthew 11:20-22:** Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. <sup>21</sup>"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. <sup>22</sup>But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

There is a great lesson to learn from these verses and that is, miracles do not bring people to repentance which is needed for salvation. Miracles were primarily to authenticate that Jesus was the Son of God. When John the Baptist sent his disciple to ask Jesus if he was the Christ prophesied to come, Jesus, to prove he was the Christ told John's disciples to tell him that the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have good news preached to them. Jesus used the miracles to prove to John that he was the Christ prophesied to come. (Luke 7:22). Chorazin and Bethsaida saw both Christ and his miracles yet it never brought them to repentance, in contrast Tyre and Sidon never even saw one miracle or Christ. Chorazin and Bethsaida had far more light revealed to them than Tyre and Sidon so they will be held far more accountable on judgment day.

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## MATTHEW 11:23-24

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### Capernaum, will you be Exalted to Heaven?

- **Matthew 11:23-24:** 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. <sup>24</sup>But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."

**Exalted to heaven:** means glorified before God, Capernaum was Jesus headquarters for much of his public ministry and his place of abode (Matt. 4:13) (Luke 4:31) and several of Jesus disciples were from Capernaum.

### In Capernaum Jesus healed:

- The paralytic man lowered through the roof (Matt. 9:1-26).
- A woman with a discharge of blood for twelve years (Matt. 9:1-22).
- A ruler's daughter who had died (Matt. 9:1-23).
- Two blind men (Matt. 9:1-30).
- A man that was mute and believed to be demon-oppressed (Matthew 9:1-33).
- A man with an unclean spirit on a Sabbath day (Mark 1:21-28).
- Simon's Peters mother in law of a fever (Mark 1:21-30).
- All who were sick and oppressed by demons brought to him (Mark 1:21-32).
- A man with a withered hand in a Synagogue on a Sabbath day. (Mark 2:1) (Mark 2:15) (Mark 3:1-5).
- A Roman Centurion servant (Luke 7:1-10).
- A man's son who was at the point of death (John 4:46-53).
- All who had diseases and demons in the city (Mark 1:21-34).

How amazing is this all these incredible miracles happened in Capernaum and yet Jesus says, Capernaum will be held more accountable than Sodom because Capernaum had more light. Once again, we see that miracles do not always lead people to repentance that leads to salvation, the general population of Capernaum, was simply coming to Christ for healing and not because they wanted to know God (of course there were exceptions).

**The principal:** is the more light a generation or an individual has the more blessed they will be, but they are also held more accountable to live according to that light.

**God has Hidden these things from the Wise and Understanding.**

- Matthew 11:25-26: 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; <sup>26</sup>yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

Wise in this context carries the idea of being self-important and prideful, conceited, egotistical, snobbish and smug while understanding refers to acting holy, religious and reverent it is the religious leaders of Jesus era the chief priest, the Pharisees and scribes who Jesus has in mind when he says God has hidden these things from the wise and understanding. The chief priest, the Pharisees and scribes knew the Scriptures and taught them in the Synagogues so they believed they were full of wisdom and understanding, but in actual fact they were blind to what God's will was and what was important to His heart. It takes a humble heart to perceive or accept Christ a prideful person will not yield to the Gospel thus Jesus thanks God that the Gospel is very simple (belief in Jesus Christ) and that those with a humble heart will understand it very easily, but those with a prideful heart will not perceive it, thus because of their pride, ego and self-righteousness it is hidden to them. It is a person heart attitude that will determine if the Gospel of salvation is hidden to them or not.

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**MATTHEW 11:27**

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**No-one knows the Father unless Jesus reveals Him.**

- Matthew 11:27: All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

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All things have been handed over to Jesus by his Father means that all authority and power needed to save a person to eternal life has been given to Christ. Know-one knows the Father unless Jesus chooses to reveal God to them means that Jesus is not going to reveal the Father to a person who is full of pride and self-righteousness, the Lord will only reveal God to those who have a humble and repentant heart.

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**MATTHEW 11:28-30**

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**Come to me, all who Labour and are Heavy Laden.**

- **Matthew 11:28-30:** Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle (meek in KJV) and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke (obligation) is easy, and my burden (task or service) is light (easy).

**Yoke:** in this context carries the idea of joining together.

Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden carries the idea of being burdened over sin and labouring to earn salvation, thus take my yoke means to join yourself to Christ and humbly trust in him, because in doing this the heart will find rest from the burden of sin and striving to be saved, by self-effort, works and adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions. This is because in Christ salvation is by grace and comes as a free gift and not self-effort therefore a believer can stop trying to earn the Father's favour and acceptance because God loves those who love the Lord Jesus Christ and grants His favour to them because of their faith in His Son. The ultimate rest for



those who belong to Jesus will be when the Lord descends from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ and we who are alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

**Jesus is, God's Gift of Grace:** the following words of Paul show the enormous importance of trusting in God's grace in Christ if we are to break free from the yoke and burden of striving to earn righteousness that leads to eternal life and enter into the rest Jesus is talking about. Paul in his letters wrote:

- I do not nullify the *GRACE* of God, for if justification were through the law (or any form of religious self-effort), then Christ died for no purpose (Gal. 2:21).

This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begin to justify themselves through the law and self-effort, they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ's death was of no value. Equally as horrific as this Paul states:

- When we forsake *GRACE* we separate ourselves from Christ because it was only by *GRACE* that God made us alive in Christ (Gal. 5:4) (Eph. 2:5).

Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that:

- It is only by *GRACE* that any brother or sister has been saved (Eph. 2:8).

Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by grace and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God. This means that without grace no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life. This means in regards to eternal salvation, Christ, God, Grace and Faith, are all on an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to eternal life without any one of them. This is the reason the author in the book of Hebrews spends so many chapters brilliantly and skillfully explaining to the Hebrews that they must stop their sin of trusting in religious works, the Levitical Law and their priesthood to be counted righteous before God and start trusting in the grace of God that is in Christ and in his righteousness to be saved to eternal life. By extension this means that Christians must stop trusting in attending a church building every week, strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions to be saved. Though the practice of some of these maybe good in themselves they become grossly sinful when believers trust in them for their salvation since not one of them has any power to save to eternal life.

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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