

Notes for Matthew -Chapter 11 (Page 1 of 6)

Introduction - Judgment and Rewards

1. If I had to summarize this chapter in 2 key words, it would be 1) judgment, and 2) rewards.
2. Jesus spends most of the chapter either complimenting people by telling them what are their rewards in heaven or condemning them to eternal judgment.
3. We are going to discover in this chapter:
 - a. God judges cities (or towns, or nations, etc.) as well as people.
 - b. When it comes to heavenly rewards, believing Christians are a “different category” than those in the Old Testament who were obedient to God. One can argue that any Christian is somehow “greater in heaven” than the Old Testament prophets.
 - c. Finally, and most importantly, God holds you accountable for what you know.
4. There is an interesting verse in Luke that summarizes a key point about this chapter:
 - a. “But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” (Luke 12:48)
 - b. To paraphrase, God judges us based on how much information we have.
5. The primary reason Jesus spends so much time on judgments and rewards is to keep the eternal perspective in view.
 - a. During times when our problems are overwhelming, it helps to keep that perspective.
 - b. One also has to keep the “eternal condemnation” in focus.
 - c. When we see wicked people prospering, we wonder why God allows that to happen.
 - i. When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me – Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. (Psalm 73:15-16, NIV).

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

1. The disciples had the rolls of “front-men”. They were to go to the towns ahead of Jesus. They were to perform miracles to validate their authority. They were preparing the way for Jesus.
2. Between the last verse of Chapter 10 and the first Verse of Chapter 11 is the time era when the disciples actually went into the surrounding towns as per Jesus’ instructions.
3. Later in this Chapter, we get the impression that not many people in these towns came to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. They may have accepted Jesus-the-miracle-worker, but not as Messiah.

Verses 2-3: When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples ³ to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

1. Verse 2 changes topics. Verse 2 is about some followers of John the Baptist coming to see Jesus and ask in effect, “Are you the Messiah or not”?
2. We learn elsewhere that King Herod put John the Baptist in jail.
 - a. History records Herod had an affair with his sister in law, & then she became his wife.
 - b. John the Baptist condemned Herod for this publicly, and John was put in jail for that.
 - c. Herod didn’t kill John (yet), as John the Baptist was a popular prophet, and the king didn’t want an uprising.
3. John the Baptist was a “wild man”. He lives out in the desert, ate honey and locusts for food and preached of a coming Messiah. John saw the dove descended upon Jesus.
4. Now here was John in a jail cell. He wasn’t used to being cooped up.
5. He may have been thinking, “Come on Jesus, if you are the Messiah, let’s get this show on the road. I did my job. I pointed people to you. I stood up to evil King Herod. When are you going to set up your kingdom and get me out of this stupid jail?”
6. The application to you & I is God does not work on our timetable.

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Verses 4-5: Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

1. Jesus appears to be quoting (or paraphrasing) Isaiah 35:5-6:
 - a. "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy." (NIV)
2. Notice what Jesus did not say: "Listen dummies, I am the Messiah, John should know that, after all, he did see the dove-like-thing land on me, right?" ☺
 - a. Assuming John the Baptist was going through a period of doubt, notice the first thing is that Jesus had compassion for John, not condemnation.
 - b. If you are "one of God's", He never stops loving you.
 - c. God has compassion for you during the times of doubt.
3. Jesus used Old Testament prophecy to validate his role as the Messiah.
 - a. Don't underestimate how important it is to use prophecy as validation.
 - b. This is essentially what Paul did as he traveled around in Acts.
4. Jesus either performed miracles in front of John's disciples, or they heard the reports of the local townspeople as to what Jesus had done. With Jesus reminding them of these scriptures, combined with the validation of some miracles, that was enough to report back to John.

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

1. Blessed can also be translated "happy".
 - a. It is the reminder that happiness and joy comes from putting our trust in Jesus.
2. Jesus is telling John in effect: "Yes, there are times of doubts. There are times when you are going to have doubts about me (Jesus). Go back to the Scriptures, and see if all of this is "real" or not."
 - a. When things are at their worse, get back to reading the bible and let the bible validate itself that Jesus is all the things he claimed he was.

Verses 7-10: As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? ⁸If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. ⁹Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is the one about whom it is written: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you."

1. The first thing to notice is that Jesus is no longer speaking to John the Baptist (via his disciples) but is now speaking to the crowd around him.
2. Later in Matthew we get clues that even after John's death, he was widely esteemed as a prophet of God. (See Matthew 14:5, 21:26)
3. Jesus, now talking to the crowd, makes them think about why they went to see John.
4. It is important at this point to compare John the Baptist with Elijah the prophet.
 - a. Elijah was an Old Testament Prophet described in 1st Kings 17-21 and 2nd Kings 1-2.
 - i. He did not die. He was "taken up by God (raptured?)" in 2nd Kings 2:11.
 - b. In Verse 11, Jesus quotes Malachi 3:1. In Malachi, there is a prophecy that a "messenger" will come before the appearance of the Messiah.
 - i. The second to last verse of Malachi, which is the last book of the Old Testament, God said that Elijah will come before the coming of the Lord:
 - ii. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:" (Mal 4:5, NIV)
 - c. Based on Malachi, Jews were looking for Elijah prior to the coming of the Messiah.

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Verses 7-10 (cont.): Comparison of John the Baptist with Elijah

- d. Here is what an angel said to John the Baptist's father: "And he (your son) will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous – to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Luke 1:17 NIV
- e. In John's Gospel, the Jewish leaders asked John the Baptist, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He (John) said, "I am not." (John 1:21)
- f. John the Baptist himself denies he is Elijah. How do you reconcile the differences?
- g. Jesus said, "And if you are willing to accept it, he (John the Baptist) is the Elijah who was to come." (Mat. 11:14 NIV)
 - i. If the nation of Israel collectively accepted Jesus, then John the Baptist does completely fulfill the prediction of Elijah.
 - ii. Since Israel collectively rejected him, then they also reject that prophecy as being fulfilled about them.
- h. In Revelation Chapter 11, there are "two witnesses" that come to give warnings of all the judgments that are about to happen during the tribulation. These two people are not named in Revelation. Bible scholars speculate that one of those two represent Elijah to come again as a double-fulfillment of the Malachi prophecy.

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

1. Jesus is saying of all the people born up to that point, none is greater than John the Baptist. That would include Noah, Moses, David and a few other biggies. ☺
2. It also is saying something equally as profound. It says he (or she) who is least in the "kingdom of heaven" (i.e., believers in Jesus) is greater than John the Baptist.
3. Does this mean that somebody who is "barely saved", has greater rewards in heaven than the Old Testament saints? Possibly, as it could refer to stature. There are two views on this:
 - a. The first view is that Christians comprehend Jesus better than the Old Testament "saints"; therefore we are "greater" than those saints.
 - i. Remember John the Baptist did not live to see Jesus death and resurrection. Therefore, John is "less blessed" than Christians who saw/understand the details.
 - b. The second view is that Christian believers are a special category in heaven. Everyone else who gets saved (Old Testament saints and those who are "judged fairly") are a "lower status" in heaven.
4. The Book of Revelation describes two separate resurrections:
 - a. "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6, NIV)
 - b. There is a second resurrection where God judges all others fairly. I agree with the view that only Christian believers get part in the first resurrection. There is a 1,000-year time gap between the two resurrections. (Revelation 20:5)
 - c. The second judgment is discussed in Revelation 20:11-14.
 - d. Note that Roman Catholics and some other denominations have an "a-millennial" view in which there is no 1,000-year time gap. They don't take the 1,000-year scriptures literally.

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

1. Remember there is a short time that Jesus is describing in this verse. It is only from the time era when John the Baptist was preaching about Jesus, until “now”, when Jesus was talking.
2. This verse is considered difficult to translate into English. That makes my job easy. ☺
 - a. In one translation, it says the “the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing (NIV); in others it says, “the kingdom of heaven suffers violence” (NKJV).
 1. Both translations could be considered correct translations.
 2. Remember “the kingdom of heaven” refers to Christian believers.
 - b. One translation emphasizes external struggles & the other emphasizes internal struggles.
 - c. The “internal” view could mean that those who are trying to become Christians are violently struggling to “get in” to God’s kingdom. It could refer to “zeal” to follow Jesus.
 - d. The “external” view refers to the spiritual warfare happening as those who are trying to become followers of Jesus are facing violence.

Verse 13: For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

1. “The Prophets and the Law” is an idiom of the collective writings of the Old Testament.
2. This verse is saying that all the prophecy writings of the Old Testament go until John the Baptist.
3. In another perspective, the main purpose of the Old Testament was to point the way to the coming of Jesus. In that idea, the Old Testament “ends” with John the Baptist.
 - a. Matthew is telling his Jewish readers in effect, “The Old Testament and its prophets are not a “closed book” until John the Baptist. The main purpose of the Old Testament is to point the way to Jesus.”

Verse 14: And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.

1. We already discussed whether John the Baptist “is/is not” Elijah, so I won’t start again.
2. Compare what Jesus said to John the Baptist, via his disciples with what Jesus said about John the Baptist after John’s disciples left.
 - a. The next few verses are all compliments about John the Baptist.
3. Why didn’t Jesus say all of these nice things in front of John’s disciples?
 - a. (Speculating) “Sometimes God has to take the role as a teacher, as opposed to a just our loving Father. He tests and works with us in order to mature us. He maybe bragging about us, but not to our face, as is the case of Jesus and the crowd.

Verse 15: “He who has ears, let him hear.”

1. This verse is Jesus’ “trademark” phrase.
2. Jesus is saying in effect, “What I am saying to you to you know, let it sink in”.
3. This expression is common in the Gospels as well as in the Book of Revelation. Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation are letters to seven churches from Jesus. Each of those letters in Revelation repeats this particular phrase.
4. Let’s combine Jesus’ words with something Paul said:
 - a. “He who has ears, let him hear.” (Jesus)
 - b. “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Paul) (Romans 10:17, NKJV)
 - c. Here was Jesus saying to hear the Word of God. Paul takes that one step further and says that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. (Reading counts too! ☺)

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Verses 16-19: "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: ¹⁷ "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn." ¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon." ¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." " But wisdom is proved right by her actions."

1. Let me try to paraphrase Jesus' illustration: "Pretend that all of us are all children. We as children played a happy tune on a musical instrument, and you as other children did not dance. We played a remorseful tune (like you would hear at a funeral march) and you did not respond."
 - a. So what does that mean? It means, "There is no pleasing some people".
 - b. John the Baptist came along, being very serious. They said, "He has a demon".
 - c. Jesus ate and drank with people who were not very religious.
 - i. He was criticized for associating with sinners.
2. The last phrase is translated here as, "But wisdom is proved right by her actions."
 - a. Other translations say, "but wisdom is justified by her children." (NKJV)
 - b. The idea here is similar to "you reap what you sow". Jesus is saying you can judge people based on their actions. The "children" reference is the idea that you can often judge children by how their parents teach them.
3. Also notice that Jesus calls himself "The Son of Man" to the religious leaders.
 - a. This title "Son of Man" is associated with the Messiah (see Daniel 7:13).

Verses 20-21: Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. ²¹ "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

1. Now these town folks are rejected Jesus' claim as the Messiah. Jesus is condemning these places.
2. Today, neither Korazin nor Bethsaida exist. They are just architectural digs.

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

1. Tyre and Sidon were towns north of Israel that are located in present-day Syria.
2. Why does Jesus say, these towns will receive less judgment? Jesus didn't go to those towns.
 - a. Remember the phrase, "to much is given, much is required". (Luke 12:48)
3. I believe the judgment on location is two-fold: The existence and blessings that a town, or nation get are based on what information, corporately, that town, city, etc. does with the bible now.
 - a. Many believe there is a nation-judgment right after the 7-year tribulation.
 - b. This is called the "sheep and goat" judgment as described in Matthew 25:31-46.

Verses 23-24: And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴ But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

1. Capernaum is another town that no longer exists today. It is an archeological dig.
2. Jesus says on some future judgment day, Sodom will have "less judgment" than Capernaum.
 - a. Jesus is saying that if Jesus performed those same miracles in Sodom and Gomorrah that had been performed in Capernaum, and then Sodom and Gomorrah repented of their sins and accepted Jesus, those towns would never have been destroyed.

Verses 25-26: At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

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Verse 25-26 (cont.)

1. Jesus is no longer focusing on the judgment of those who did not accept him.
 - a. Instead, he gives God the Father praise for those who do accept him.
 2. Jesus is saying in effect "Father, thank you for not revealing the truth of who I am to all the religious leaders and the scholars. Instead you revealed it to the "common folk"".ol> - a. Suppose only the "scholarly" figured out the truth about Jesus? Then everyone else would think, "I have to be really smart or very educated before I can get into heaven."
3. For you see your calling (to salvation), brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; (1st Corinthians 1:26-27, NKJV)
 - a. Queen Victoria stated she was saved by the letter "m" in "many" in these verses.

Verse 27: "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

1. Ever wonder what God the Father is like? Jesus says, "Learn of me, and you'll know the Father.
2. This is one of those Jesus-is-the-only-way verses in the bible.
 - a. "Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6, NIV)
3. We have two parts of the "trinity" in focus here. The word "Trinity" is not in the bible. It was coined by the early church to describe the mystery of "three distinct God's, yet they are all one".

Verses 28-30: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

1. If I had to pick a few verses to memorize, these would be it.
2. First, let's talk about "yoke's".
 - a. A yoke is a custom-made harness for an ox. "Jesus the carpenter" may have made them.
 - b. When oxen were used to plow, they were typically sent out in pairs.
 1. The older ox did the real pulling, while the younger ox had a light yoke, and followed along to learn the system.
 - c. This verse is to say, "My yoke is easy. I'm the one doing the strong work, and I want you to be harnesses to follow me. You get the "light-yoke" and I get the "strong yoke".
3. Jesus wants us to follow him. Thus, we put on a "light-yoke" to be his servants.
4. How does Jesus give us "rest" for our souls?
 - a. The Gospel (i.e., "good news") is that we don't have to work to make God happy.
 - b. The "rest" comes from never having to worry about salvation.
 - c. Second, it has to do with regular confession of our sins.
 - d. We get "rest" in knowing that God has forgiven us of our sins.
5. When Jesus says, "his burden is light", he means we don't have to worry. We give our lives to God, and He is now in charge. No more worries.
 - a. "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. (Psalm 37:25, NIV).
 - b. "Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall. (Psalm 55:12, NIV)
6. When times of worry come, I often have to give my worries to God in "baby steps". Here is an example, "OK God, for the next 5 minutes, I'm not going to worry about this issue." Start in small time chunks if you find yourself dealing with worries.
7. Remember, "If you are going to pray, why worry? If you are going to worry, why pray?"