

“Come to me, and I will give you rest...”

Matthew 11

Messengers from John the Baptist (Matthew 11 v 1 to 19)

- “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another” (v 3)? Why did John, who previously recognised Jesus as the Messiah and who baptized him, ask this question? Remember, where was John at this time? Jesus' answer was to tell John that the prophecies regarding the Messiah (e.g. Isaiah 35 v 5, 6) were being fulfilled...
- How did Jesus rate John (see verses 9, 11)? But what does he mean by “the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (v 11)?

“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force...” (v 12) may suggest the provocative nature of John's ministry, or the intensity and cost of becoming a member of God's kingdom. This verse implies that the kingdom of heaven can never be received 'passively'...

John may also be seen as Elijah (v 14), in a partial fulfilment of Malachi 4 v 5. John was not *actually* Elijah, but he ministered in the same in spirit and power of Elijah, thus fulfilling his 'office' (see Luke 1 v 17). Because John was Elijah in this symbolic sense, Jesus added the comment "if you are willing to receive it".

Verses 16 to 19: “You are like sulky children,” Jesus says. Those who have a heart to criticise will always find something to criticise. Many people were not pleased with *either* John or Jesus. “Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds” (v 19) – wise people are shown by their wise actions, including the wisdom to accept *both* Jesus and John, for who they were, and for what were called to be...

Woe to unrepentant cities (Matthew 11 v 20 to 24)

- Here we can see some important principles behind God's judgement of mankind – what are they, and what relevance do they have today?
- So, what can we say about the Western World's accountability before God – given our easy access to the Gospel and the Scriptures, the abundance of churches, our freedom of worship, religious tolerance and lack of persecution?

Come to me and I will give you rest (Matthew 11 v 25 v 30)

“Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (v 28 to 30). Jesus shows his authority when he says “Come to *me*.” The invitation is unthinkable if it is given by anyone else but God. Jesus directs his call to those who are burdened. He calls those who sense they must come to him to relieve their need, instead of living in self-sufficiency. Jesus makes a wonderful offer, inviting us to take his yoke upon us and learn from him. We must come as disciples to learn, willing to be guided by his yoke. Jesus describes his promised gift as “rest for your souls”. This gift is as simple as it is powerful and profound...

[MORE OVER...]

- So who are the “wise and understanding” and who are the “little children” (v 25)?
- In these verses we see an amazing combination of Jesus' authority and his humility. What do these verses teach us about Jesus, and about the attitude he asks from us?
- Consider Jesus' wonderful invitation in v 28 to 30. To whom is the invitation given? What three things does he ask us to do? What does Jesus promise us? Why do you think his “yoke is easy” and his burden light? If you find your yoke hard and your burden heavy, what might be the problem?

Prayer – Lord Jesus, thank you for your amazing invitation to come to you, for we toil and labour, and we are heavily laden – with our sins, sorrows, anxieties and burdens of many kinds.

Thank you for your promise that we will indeed find rest for our souls, deep spiritual peace, knowing that our sins are forgiven and that you have a plan and purpose for each one of us, going forwards.

Help us to follow your leading and to learn from you, knowing that your burden is light because you bear it with us.

Amen.