

The Invitation to Learn New Truths About the Kingdom

📖 Matthew 11:25-30

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We are studying the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew is a very significant Gospel because it does something none of the other gospels do and that is explain what is happening to the kingdom program. The kingdom program was outlined and predicted in the OT as being heralded by a forerunner of the King who would die and be raised to bring a great conflagration destroying His enemies and establish His kingdom on earth. The problem is that the forerunner came and heralded Jesus as the King and the King died and was raised but there was no conflagration or establishment of His kingdom. Was Jesus then really the King? If Jesus was the King then why did He not bring a great conflagration to destroy His enemies? Why did He not establish the kingdom? There was a twist, from the human perspective, introduced in the kingdom program, something that was not predicted in the OT. The twist was that the nation Israel, though genuinely being offered the kingdom, did not receive their King and therefore the kingdom's arrival would be postponed until they do receive Him. Matthew is explaining how this twist came about and what is happening while the kingdom is postponed.

One way the Gospel of Matthew can be outlined, and this is the simple way, is by dividing it into three parts; Matthew 1-11 the kingdom offer, Matt 12 the kingdom rejected and Matt 13-28 the kingdom postponed. So offer, rejection, postponement is a good schematic way to outline the book. Another way the Gospel of Matthew can be outlined is technically more correct because it respects Matthew's arrangement of the material. Matthew reports in a narrative certain events and then follows that with a discourse explaining the events. His arrangement is detected by an expression repeated after each narrative-discourse section. This expression is, "And after these things Jesus..." (*και εγενετο οτε ετελεσεν ο Ιησους...* Matt 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:28; 26:1). Divided this way we discover Matthew's five narratives followed by discourse arrangements. Basically the first is Matthew 1-7, the second is Matthew 8-10, the third is Matthew 11-13, the fourth is Matthew 14-19, the fifth is Matthew 20-26 and then there is a conclusion. Each narrative sets the context for the discourse that follows. Most of sections are arranged chronologically but one of them is arranged thematically. Matthew has recorded more discourse material than any other gospel writer and so we find the greatest amount of Jesus' teaching in this gospel.

Our present study is in Matthew 11. This is within the third narrative-discourse section. This section is chronological. The narrative is Matthew 11-12. In it Matthew recounts the confusion of John the Baptist over

Jesus' Messiahship, the escalation of opposition to the kingdom among those Jews in the Galilee, the warnings of coming judgment for rejecting the miracles, various questions about the Law, more Messianic miracles, the rejection of Jesus by the leadership, the unpardonable sin, and Jesus' proclamation that there will be no more signs except the sign of resurrection. The discourse that follows this narrative is Matthew 13. It is a discourse in parables. This is the first time Jesus had spoken in parables. Why did Jesus change from direct discourse to parabolic discourse? Because of the nation's unbelief and rejection. They had seen clearly the presentation of the King, His words and His authenticating works and yet they had rejected. In light of the rejection Jesus began using a new teaching method of parables. Why parables? What were the parables designed to do? Disclose truth only to Jesus' followers. What truth? The postponement of the kingdom. The postponement of the kingdom is classified as a mystery. A mystery is something unknown because unrevealed. In other words, the kingdom program revealed in the OT did not include the idea that the kingdom would be postponed. So the parables teach a new truth related to the kingdom; that the kingdom would be postponed temporarily because of Israel's unbelief and rejection. That gives a run-down of where we are going in the narrative followed by discourse in Matt 11-13. This is a pivotal section because Matt 11 is still during the kingdom offer, Matt 12 is the kingdom rejected and Matt 13 is the kingdom postponed. So it's the bridge that brings the whole book together and without these three chapters, especially Matt 12, we would not understand what happened to the kingdom program. Matthew 12 is absolutely pivotal. We cannot emphasize too much the importance of this chapter for understanding the kingdom program. Without it we really do not know how to cogently argue that while Jesus is the King He did not establish His kingdom. Because of it we know that the problem was not with the King but with the nation's rejection of the King. The nation Israel must receive Jesus as the King for Him to establish His kingdom on the earth.

Last time we covered Matt 11:20-24 and we quoted Barnhouse who said, "Those who really wish to know their Bibles should see that we are in new country from this verse forward. Draw a thick black line between the nineteenth and twentieth verses. There is a great divide here."¹ What Barnhouse observed was that Jesus markedly shifts His tone in verse 20. Before verse 20 Jesus had the tone of a Shepherd seeking to gather lost sheep, the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In verse 20 He has the tone of a Judge pronouncing "woe" upon whole cities. So the verse that marks the beginning of the final rejection is 11:20. The final rejection is later in Matt 12:38-45. But here we see the beginning of it. Whole cities would now go to destruction because the miracles done in them were sufficient to evoke repentance but they did not. In 11:21, Jesus pronounces judgment on Chorazin and Bethsaida, both cities in the Galilee. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago." In other words, the hearts of the Jews of these cities were harder than the hearts of pagan Gentiles known for Baalism. In 11:22, "Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you." The reason the Gentiles of those cities would have a more tolerable judgment than the Jews of those cities is because the Jews had much more special revelation than they had received and

the principle is that the more revelation you receive the greater the responsibility. In 11:23 He singles out the city of Capernaum as the worst of all. "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven," an expression referring to gaining a famous reputation. There were so many miracles done in Capernaum that they could have had a very famous reputation if they had received Him. But no, "You will descend to Hades," an expression referring to their reputation going down the drain. He then compares their hearts to the hearts of those in Sodom by saying that "if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day." Those of Sodom would have repented if they saw the same miracles done in them. "Nevertheless," 11:24 "I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you." This is a stunning rebuke by way of the principle that with great light comes great responsibility. These Jewish cities had tremendous light, so much light that even pagan Gentiles would have repented, and yet they did not repent. This marked shift in Jesus' tone marks the beginning of the final rejection that culminates in Matt 12:38-45.

We come now to Matt 11:25-30. Here we find some interesting dialogue as well as some important doctrine. The overall theme is that in light of the rejection Jesus was now calling those who had repented to separate and follow Him. In other words, He is inviting the remnant to separate themselves from the larger body of Israel. Toussaint says, "The invitation is an indication of rejection since it is a call to those who had humbly repented to separate themselves from proud Israel and to come to Him."²

Matt 11:25 begins saying, **At that time**... The expression is used by Matthew to refer to a change of subject. We know from Luke that this did not follow on the heels of his denunciation of these cities. Matthew now wants to invite those who had believed in Him to follow Him. The invitation is introduced by words from Jesus to the Father. The NASB says **At that time Jesus said**, but this leaves out an entire Greek word that is often thought to be superfluous.³ It is doubtful that any words in Scripture are superfluous. God does not speak superfluously. The original text says, "At that time Jesus, being answered, said..."⁴ In other words, it seems that Jesus was in a behind the scenes conversation with the Father and at this time in the discussion He "Spoke to his Father in audible voice."⁵ What we find here is one of those rare glimpses into the behind the scenes conversations that we might imagine were repeatedly taking place between the Father and the Son. These conversations were necessary to remaining in close fellowship during His earthly ministry.

At that time Jesus, being answered by His Father, publicly said, **I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth**. The Greek word translated **praise** is from *εξομολογεω* which has several meanings. It may mean "to accept an offer or proposal," "to confess or admit to wrongdoing," "to declare openly by profession" or the more general "to praise." It seems to me that in this context it means "to declare openly by profession" since He and the Father had been in a private discussion. Jesus' words are often viewed as a prayer but Jesus makes no requests and so it is probably better to view this as a public declaration. Jesus is publicly declaring that God is still in control despite the opposition.

Jesus refers to God in two ways. First as **Father**. **Father** signifies the nature of God as one who originated all things and cares for all things. The reference to Him as **Father** and the Son's relationship to Him will be amplified in verse 27. Secondly, the reference to Him as **Lord of heaven and earth** signifies that He is sovereign over all. Despite the nation Israel's opposition to Him and His kingdom program through the Son the Father is still **Lord of heaven and earth**. While He may be opposed His ultimate rule in the universal kingdom cannot be thwarted. The only concept of the kingdom of God other than the earthly kingdom in Scripture is the universal kingdom where God reigns from. This kingdom has been from all eternity and is never in jeopardy. He is always **Lord of heaven and earth**. The reference to Him as **Lord of heaven and earth** will be amplified in verses 25 and 26.

What we see in verses 25 and 26 are public declarations of the Father's sovereignty over dispensing revelation. Jesus says it this way, **that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants**. The expression **these things** must refer to the **things** that the Father and Son had been speaking about secretly. **These things** seem to be further truths about the kingdom. These further truths were being hidden from some and revealed to others. They were being hidden from **the wise and the intelligent**. Glasscock thinks "the "wise and intelligent" must apply to entire villages and cities of Israel who rejected their Messiah."⁶ The previous context might point in this direction but the description **wise and intelligent** refers to those who were considered biblical scholars and most of the people in villages and cities were not considered scholars. J. Dwight Pentecost is probably more correct in identifying them as the Pharisees. He says "The Pharisees considered themselves to be wise and learned because they were students of the Scriptures."⁷ The Pharisees were the dominant sect and leadership of the nation Israel. They did not receive further truths about the kingdom because their wisdom and intelligence got in the way. Divine wisdom and intelligence are not what gets in the way but human wisdom and intelligence do get in the way. The idea is that the Pharisees had human wisdom and intelligence and it got in the way of their acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah. Consequently the **Lord of heaven and earth** had hidden further truths about the kingdom from them. On the flipside He had **revealed** these further truths **to infants**. **Infants**, by nature, are humbly dependent. They recognize their needs and continually ask for their needs to be met. Those who were **infants** in the nation recognized their need for the King and continually asked the Father to meet their needs by praying in this way, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Consequently the **Lord of heaven and earth** had begun to give them further truths about the kingdom.

Here we see the two basic attitudes toward God and the consequences. Those who are **wise and intelligent** in their own sight reveal their autonomy and arrogance. They consider themselves to be sufficient. They do not recognize or ask for their needs to be met by God. They depend only upon themselves. Hence God does not give them further understanding. Those who are **infants** in their own sight reveal their dependence and humility. They consider God to be sufficient. They recognize and ask for their needs to be met by God. They depend only upon Him. Consequently God gives them further understanding. This dichotomy in the nation will be seen very clearly in the Matt 13 discourse by way of parables.

Paul in 1 Cor 1:26 teaches a similar dichotomy during the church age when he says to those believers who became enamored with human wisdom at Corinth, "Consider your calling brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble..." There are those who are wise according to human fleshly standards but God does not typically call those of this class because they don't recognize their need for Him. It doesn't mean that being wise or powerful or wealthy are wrong in themselves but that those who are wise or powerful or wealthy tend to think of themselves as self-made and self-sufficient and this is a hindrance to recognizing their need for Christ and His salvation.

Concluding this issue Constable says, "The 'wise and prudent [or learned]'" are the self-sufficient Jews who rejected Jesus because they felt no need for what He offered. The "babes [or little children]" are the dependent who received Jesus' teaching as needy individuals. Israel was not humble but proud. Consequently she could not understand the things that Jesus revealed to her."⁸ These things relate primarily to further truths about the kingdom that were not revealed in the OT. Only those who were humble like infants would now have access to these further truths.

In Matt 11:26 Jesus says, **Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.** What was **well-pleasing** in the Father's **sight** was to hide further truths about the kingdom to the prideful Pharisees and to reveal further truths about the kingdom to the humble Jew who had responded positively to Jesus' teaching. The hiding of truth from some is not arbitrary but a judgment for their negative response to prior revelation. Carson says, concealing is not an "act of injustice but of judgment."⁹ It is sinful to reject God's revelation. The Pharisees had tons of revelation from the Father and they had rejected it. He was not obligated to give them more. The humble had accepted the revelation. It was **well-pleasing in** for Him to give them more. The more is more truths related to the kingdom program. This will be clarified in the parables of Matt 13.

In Matt 11:27 Jesus now connects Himself to the Father in such a way as to equate Himself with the Father. **All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.** Several things in this statement prove powerfully the distinction of person and equality of essence of the Father and the Son. First, **all things have been handed over to Me by My Father.** The **all things** refer to all things in "heaven and earth" in verse 25. Since the Father is Lord of all heaven and earth and they have been handed over to the Son then the Father is distinct in person from the Son, the Son is equal in essence to the Father and in the order of rank the Father is head of the Son. So many wonderful truths of the Trinity are packed into verse 27 that a denial of the Trinity is a denial of Scripture. Second, **and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son.** The word translated **knows** and **know** is *επιγνωσις* and refers to true, real, actual knowledge. The same word is used of the **Father's** knowledge of the **Son** as well as the **Son's** knowledge of the **Father.** If the **Father's** knowledge of the **Son** is exhaustive then the **Son's** knowledge of the **Father** is also exhaustive. This can only be if the Son is equal to the Father. The sense in which He is equal is in essence. The

Father and the Son are two distinct persons but equal in essence. They are two persons in the one true God and thus have comprehensive knowledge of one another. Third, **and anyone to whom the Sons wills to reveal Him**. Since the Father had handed over all things to the Son and the Son and Father know each other entirely then the Son is at liberty to reveal the Father to whomever He wishes. Since the Father and the Son are always together in unison then the Son's will is always the Father's will. Jesus would then reveal further truths about the kingdom to the same humble Jews to whom it was well-pleasing in the Father's sight to reveal them.

10:28 is thus an invitation to discipleship to those who had already humbly responded positively to Him. Jesus would teach them more about the kingdom than had been revealed in the OT. The further truths about the kingdom are contained in the parables of Matt 13. The cryptic genre of parables are how Jesus would proclaim further truths about the kingdom openly and yet they only be heard and understood by a select group. His invitation to receive these truths is verse 28, **Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest, 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. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light**. In verse 28 the adverb **Come** has imperatival force. Those who are willing should **come to Him**. The call is broad - directed to **all who are weary and heavy-laden**. Those who **are weary** are those Jews who are tired from toiling to find the truth. The verb **heavy-laden** is passive voice and means loaded down with burdens. It was the Pharisees who had loaded the people down with burdens as they tried to find the truth. Plummer says, "The one refers to the weary search for truth and for relief for a troubled conscience; the other refers to the heavy load of observances that give no relief..."¹⁰ In short, religious observance does not result in rest for a soul. Many people are tied up in religion and try to find rest through religious ritual. They will never find it. It is a tiresome and heavy burden to carry. Glasscock says, "The idea of "heavy-laden" is certainly to be associated with Christ's condemnation of the Pharisees for tying heavy burdens upon the Jews by their rules, regulations, and artificial standards (23:4; Luke 11:46)."¹¹ Jesus, in effect, says, **Come to Me, all who are** trying to follow religion **and I will give you rest**. The verb **rest** means etymologically "to rest up." He would help them get caught up on their rest. As such He would revive them, give them a fresh start from all the religious burdens if only they came to Him.

In 10:29 He continues saying, **"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me."** A. T. Robertson says, "The rabbi's used yoke for school as many pupils find it now a yoke."¹² To take Jesus' **yoke upon** one's self would be to enter into His school of discipleship. It is not a call to salvation but a call to discipleship. Jesus is the headmaster of the school and the invitation is to enter into His school to learn from His master teaching. In confirmation of this interpretation He further says, **and learn from Me**. **Learn** is from the Greek verb *μανθανω* and means "to gain knowledge or skill by instruction." Those who took His yoke upon them were going to learn from Him new truths about the kingdom. These new truths will be explained in the Discourse In Parables of Matthew 13. In the main they explain that there will be a postponement of the kingdom's establishment. This was not taught in the OT. It was a new truth about the kingdom. The fact that Jesus is revealing that He is going to teach new truths about the kingdom indicates that the rejection of the kingdom had already or was in the process of taking place. As

Toussaint says, "The invitation...shows that the nation as a group had decided already to reject Christ. Because of this decision Jesus now extends an invitation, not to Israel as a nation, but to individual Jews to come to Him. Despite Israel's rejection He would give these individuals rest."¹³

This rest is spoken of next and depends upon the character of Jesus; **for I am gentle and humble in heart and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS**. The reason that entering Jesus' school and learning from Him would bring **REST FOR THEIR SOULS** is because Jesus' character was the exact opposite of the religious leaders of the day. There were several sects in Jesus' day - the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, the Zealots and the Essenes, but the sect that dominated were the Pharisees. The 6,000 Pharisees at the time of Christ had a disproportionate rule and controlled every facet of life. Even the Sadducees had to bow to their decisions even though their doctrine radically differed. Jesus is contrasting Himself with the Pharisees. The Pharisees were overly impressed with themselves and pretentious. They looked down on others who did not live up to their standards as in the well-known story of the Pharisee and the tax collector praying in the Temple. The tax collector beat his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" whereas the Pharisee said, "God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get." Look at me God and look at me everyone else. Jesus was not like them at all. Jesus was the exact opposite of them. He proclaims Himself to be **gentle and humble in heart**. The Greek word **gentle** is *πραυς*. It is translated in the beatitudes as "meek." It has the sense of strength coupled with not being overly impressed with one's self importance. The Greeks did not consider this a desirable characteristic but a deplorable one. Jesus elevated it from something undesirable to desirable in this and other texts. The Greek word **humble** is *ταπεινος* and means "unpretentious." Someone who is unpretentious does not do things for show. They are not concerned whether men see them perform some righteous deed or not. For them their only audience is God. Jesus was both meek and humble; strong, but not overly impressed with His importance and unconcerned with putting on a show for other people. While neither was embodied by the Pharisees or extolled by the Greeks they would be attractive to Jews who had for so long been under the burdensome yoke of the Pharisees. He was a different teacher indeed. Alfred Edershem says, "Christ was Himself alike the true lesson and the best Teacher for those "babes."...He had done what He taught, and He taught what He had done; and so, by coming unto Him, would true rest be found for the soul."¹⁴ The OT citation, **YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS** comes from Jer 6:16. In Jer 6 God is pronouncing destruction upon Jerusalem that came in 588-586BC. The judgment came because they and their leaders had wandered far from Him, everyone was greedy and dealt falsely, they were not ashamed of all their abominations, they closed their ears to the word of God, they took no delight in it. The Lord implored them to "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'" For Israel to find rest for their souls they needed to return to the true teaching of the Law, that which was given at Mt Sinai. But because they would not they suffered destruction. Jesus in Matt 11:29 is imploring His generation to separate from the Pharisees and join Him in returning to the ancient path of the Law given at Mt Sinai. There

they will find rest. Of course, all those He is calling here would be believing in Him as the Messiah, so they would be coming to the Law as believers, already justified in God's sight.

In 11:30 His explanation for why they should come to Him and take up His school and learn from Him is that **"My yoke is easy and My burden is light."** This expression answers to the verse 28 expression of being **weary and heavy-laden** under all the rules and procedures of the Pharisees. Jesus' school was very different than that of the Pharisees. The Pharisees put on their shoulders burdensome regulations. Pentecost says, "In contrast to the burdensome yoke of the Pharisees, those who took Christ's yoke and learned of Him would find that submission to Him was easy and that the burden He imposed was light."¹⁵ The Greek word translated **easy** means "comfortable" and contrasts with all the discomforts caused by Pharisaic regulations. Because Jesus' yoke was comfortable we come to grasp the pleasure and joy that comes from following Him and His teachings. Those who do not find joy and pleasure in following Him are still encased in a legalist straightjacket, burdening themselves with nitpicky details rather than enjoying freedom in Christ. True teaching does not enslave but sets free. The Greek word translated **light** means "not heavy" and thus easy to bear and stands in contrast to the heavy burdens of all the Pharisaic regulations.

In summary, by this time the rejection by the leadership in particular and the nation in general had already taken place. Jesus was preparing to minister to the small believing remnant in the wake of the rejection. He is calling the small believing remnant to separate themselves entirely from the Pharisees and follow Him. It was time to teach them new truths related to the kingdom. The primary new truth is that the kingdom is going to be postponed. This truth is a major focus of Matthew and will only be understood by those who have ears to hear.

By application what can we learn? First, acceptance of basic truths is necessary to understanding more advanced truths. Not all people can understand all truths. Just as someone who has never accepted their ABC's cannot read so someone who has not accepted the basic truths of the Bible cannot learn the advanced truths of the Bible. There is a progression in learning and understanding truth and more advanced truths are blocked off from those who do not accept basic truths. Second, sometimes you have to separate from an immature group because it is a stumbling block to advancing. Those who believed in Jesus needed to separate from the Pharisees because Pharisaism was a stumbling block to advancing in truth. You may have to break off of a legalistic group of Christians because it's a stumbling block. Instead of getting bogged down in trite baby discussion you need to move on and associate with those who are getting into the more advanced discussions that already presuppose basic truths. You should always be seeking for higher levels of discussion on the more advanced truths. Paul in Corinthians and the author of Hebrews both implore believers to move beyond basics to more advanced material. Jesus is doing the same thing here. Come, enter my school and learn from Me. When you do you will find that He is the real deal; both talking the talk and walking the walk. His teaching is not burdensome, nor difficult to bear because it teaches us to live by faith and not by self-effort. Nor is it a list of hundreds of ritual procedures to follow but broad principles that govern a relational way of living in holiness.

¹ Donald Grey Barnhouse quoted by Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 155.

² Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 156.

³ Cf NET Bible.

⁴ My translation of the expression, *Εν εκεινω τω καιρω αποκριθεις ο Ιησους ειπεν...*

⁵ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Mt 11:25.

⁶ Ed Glasscock, *Matthew*, p 254.

⁷ J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 201.

⁸ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 11:25.

⁹ Cited by Ed Glasscock, *Matthew*, p 254.

¹⁰ Plummer, *Exegetical Commentary*, p 170.

¹¹ Ed Glasscock, *Matthew*, p 255.

¹² A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Matt 11:29.

¹³ Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 157.

¹⁴ Cited by J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 201.

¹⁵ J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 202.