

Informal Bible Study

Discussion Guide for the Gospel of Matthew

Chapter 11

Verses 1-15

Overview

In chapter 11, John the Baptist sends word from his prison cell to our Lord Jesus Christ asking if He is the Expected One. Jesus mentions the signs He has performed which prove that He is indeed the promised Messiah, the long expected King of Israel. Jesus takes this opportunity to praise John as the greatest Old Covenant prophet. Then Jesus turns His attention to the generation of Jews before Him and speaks prophetic words to them. In the tradition of the Hebrew prophets, Jesus brings both a message of judgment and a message of hope, meant for two very different groups in Israel. Let's examine the messages that Jesus delivers in this chapter in light of this prophetic tradition.

Questions

1. In chapter 10 of Matthew, Jesus the King sends out His messengers – the 12 apostles - to proclaim that the Kingdom was at hand. He instructs them at length as to how they were to conduct themselves and what to expect. Yet as Matthew 11 begins, it is not the 12 apostles who are preaching and teaching in the cities of Israel – it is Jesus. In fact, Matthew never records the 12 apostles carrying out the charge that Jesus gave them in chapter 10.

It is Luke who records the twelve going throughout the villages of Israel, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. **See Luke 9:1-10.** See also **Luke 10:1-24** for a second parallel passage to Matthew 10 and 11. Discuss similarities and differences between Luke and Matthew here.

2. The first part of Matthew chapter 11 features John the Baptist.

Where is he at this time? (see verse 2).

What question does John give his disciples to pose to Jesus? (verse 3)

How does Jesus handle this question? (verses 4 to 6)

Who is John the Baptist? (See Luke 1:67-80)

What has he already done before this? (See Luke 3:1-22)

Why is John the Baptist in prison? (See Matthew 14:1-5; Mark 6:14-20)

3. Matthew 11:5 has a quotation from Isaiah 35. Let's read **Isaiah 35:1-10** together now.

What is Isaiah describing in this passage?

Matthew 11:5 ALSO quotes from Isaiah 61. As you can see this is a very important verse, this Matthew 11:5. Let's read **Isaiah 61:1-9** together now.

What is Isaiah describing in this passage?

There is one important additional aspect to Isaiah 61:1-9 that makes it a more comprehensive passage than Isaiah 35:1-10. Do you know what it is?

For help, let's now read **Luke 4:14-30**.

What is the situation in Luke 4:14-30?

Where does Jesus stop when He reads from Isaiah 61?

Why?

What does Jesus say concerning what He read in Isaiah 61?

Put it all together - how do we line up what Isaiah is describing in chapters 35 and 61 with events (past and future) that concern our Lord Jesus Christ?

4. Matthew 11:7-15 contain our Lord Jesus Christ's tribute to John the Baptist.

What does Jesus say about John?

5. In **Matthew 11:10**, Jesus quotes from the book of Malachi. Let's now read **Malachi 3:1 – 4:6**.

Let's take a few minutes to learn about the book of Malachi.

See handout with **Old Testament timeline** with brief descriptions of each book.

6. What Old Testament figure does Jesus mention in **Mat 11:14** in connection with John the Baptist?

What does Jesus say is the relationship between John and Elijah? Who is that message for?

In **Malachi 4:1-6**, the prophet Malachi says that the Lord will send Elijah – when?

Discuss this in connection with the timeline of the first and second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Is this reference to Elijah in Malachi 4 also a reference to John the Baptist?

7. Jesus makes two fascinating statements in Matthew 11:11 and 12. Let's discuss what Jesus meant when He said these things about John the Baptist and the kingdom of heaven.