

Lesson 15: Review of Matthew 11:1-19: "Was Jesus An Underachiever?"

The question has a ring of disrespectfulness to it. It is as arrogant as it sounds if it is implying that Jesus was, indeed, an underachiever. But, rest assured that this writer does not believe that Jesus was in anyway an underachiever; He was matchless in His power and purpose! But, to be sure, the Jewish people were not impressed with Him. He truly was, as Isaiah described in Isaiah 53:2b-3, unattractive and non-majestic in His appearance. He was not one to "wow" the crowd with His charisma. But, He was and is the Son of God, and unless God opens the eyes of sinners, sinners will NEVER recognize Him as Messiah, God's Savior King! So, to those who were "blind" to the Truth, Jesus would always appear as an underachiever. After all, they may argue, He could do miracles but He could not save Israel from Roman occupation or Himself from death on a Roman cross.

In Matthew 11:1-19 we find Jesus *refocusing John* the Baptist who was questioning if Jesus was truly the Messiah from God; we find Jesus *refocusing the crowd* who would always be misinterpreting Jesus and His mission; and we find Jesus *refocusing His disciples* in order for them to always look and listen to Him and not to public opinion polls.

Let's consider the *refocusing of John* (11:1-6). Have you ever been disappointed with God? You had expectations and those expectations failed to materialize? I think, then, you can understand why John would ask the question, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" (11:3)

John had knowledge of who Jesus was and what his own role was to be in putting Jesus forward as God's Messiah. He knew that Jesus must become greater and he must become less (John 3:30). But, imagine John's personal crisis. He was the promised "forerunner" of God's Messiah, the Savior King. He preached repentance to the people of Israel calling them to prepare for Messiah. But we find John in one of King Herod's dungeon-like prisons while Jesus' popularity is not growing. Jesus was never in the national limelight. This is indicated in Matthew 14 where we read that only after John the Baptist's beheading does Herod begin hearing reports about Jesus.

But in 11:4 we see Jesus begin refocusing John by bringing John back to the Scriptures! This point serves us as we see Jesus demonstrate His love for the integrity of God's word. He walked John's disciples through Isaiah 35:5-6 and Isaiah 61:1-2. Jesus refocuses John by pointing him to the fact that what God had promised was indeed coming to pass. This was the most loving thing for Jesus to do for John because John was a man of God. Here's something helpful to remember: Your strength to remain faithful will always begin and end with the Word of God! How has the Bible been used by God to both refocus you and reaffirm God's love for you so that you remain faithful through trials of different kinds?

Next Jesus *refocuses the crowd* (11:7-15). The crowd was in danger of *running away* with misconceptions about John and about Jesus. Just like in our day false belief and false information suppresses the truth, which leads to deceiving and being deceived. Jesus would go on the record before all the people and proclaim the fact that John was *exactly* the one predicted by the prophet Malachi (11:9-10). And if John was *the prophet to precede* Christ then the people were accountable to God for their own rejection of the prophet's message: "Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!" And if John was the prophet then Jesus was and *is* in fact the Christ of God! We are accountable because we too have heard.

Can you better appreciate Jesus' words to the crowd in 11:15: "He who has ears, let Him hear." I wonder, how many people let those words go in one ear and out the other? How many would mourn over their inability to get it? Which of the two kinds of people do you think Jesus would be willing to *explain* the very thing they are to hear? To which group do you belong? To those who gloss over Jesus' words, or of those who strive to hear Him with all their might?

Finally, *Jesus refocuses His disciples*. It is arguable whether Jesus is talking with the crowd or with His disciples. I find verse 15 to be a reasonable break in Jesus focus. It is as if in 11:16 that He invites His disciples to observe the crowds that surrounded Jesus at this point.

He says to them, "To what can I compare this generation?" and then goes on describing them as being fickle. He describes them as wanting John to dance, and Jesus to mourn. John should be celebrating the coming Messiah (compare 11:17a with 18), and Jesus be sober in spirit because Messiah will judge the nations. In both cases the crowd finds both John and Jesus to be inappropriate and not pleasing. Jesus' disciples must not follow public opinion polls as to how they should worship and how they should minister to a lost and dying world because the world will always find fault with the True Jesus and the True message of the Gospel. There is one God and Savior even the Lord Jesus Christ!

I believe this message needs to be heard by Christians in America. We cannot conform to the world in hopes of having the world accept the message. We must conform to Christ and hold firm to His Word. For faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ! Wisdom is proved right by her actions (11:19)!

Questions for Matthew 11:20-30 “The Pleasure Of God”

1. From the notes on page 1, **A)** what impressed and/or helped you? **B)** Explain “A”.

Introduction to Matthew 11:20-30: Imagine watching Jesus as He performed miracles and preached about the Kingdom. Imagine the crowd becoming hostile as the very implications of His preaching became crystal clear. If you and were in the crowd we would squirm as Jesus speaks of condemnation and of salvation. In this passage we Jesus reveal His role as both the Judge of the rebellious and the Revelation of God’s salvation to all who believe in Him. These roles are clearly contrasted in our passage this week.

2. Read Matthew 11:20-24. “Jesus Condemns Unbelief, pt. 1”. **A)** List as many words or phrases in 11:20-24 that speak of judgment. Which words do you find repeated and how many times? **B)** List the phrases that indicate that Jesus is responsible for judgment upon unbelief. **C)** Read John 5:22-23. What reason does Jesus give for why He has been entrusted with judgment? **D)** In 11:20 the NIV uses the word “denounce”. The KJV uses the word “upbraid”. For what reason did Jesus “denounce” or “upbraid”? **E)** What miracles were worked in Bethsaida (11:21)? Look up Mark 8:22; Luke 9:10-17 for help. **F)** What miracles do the following references tell us Jesus performed in Capernaum (11:23)? See Matt. 8:5-17; 9:1-8.

3. Read Matthew 11:20-24. “Jesus Condemns Unbelief, pt. 2”. **A)** Background on “Tyre and Sidon” Find “Tyre and Sidon” on a Bible map. They are located outside of Israel. Read the following for some background on Tyre and Sidon: Ezekiel 27& 28; Amos 1:9-10 **B)** Why did judgment come on Tyre and Sidon? **C)** How does Matthew 15:21-28 prove Jesus right? **D)** Read Genesis 18:20 and 19:24. Why and how did God destroy Sodom? **E)** Read 2 Peter 2:4-10. For what purpose do you think Peter lists the judgments in this passage? **F)** What (who) did Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum have that Tyre, Sidon and Sodom did not have? What advantages do people in our country have that Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum did not have?

4. Read Matthew 11:25-30. “Jesus Rewards Faith”. **A)** Who does Jesus give credit to for revealing the Truth about who He (Jesus) is and the Truth about a coming judgment? **B)** What does Jesus say motivated God to provide this revelation about Christ and a judgment to come? (v26) **C)** In 11:27 How does Jesus say we come to know the Father? **D)** From these verses (25-27) who then is responsible for our knowing God and receiving faith to believe in Him? **E)** List the promises for you found in 11:28-30. Describe why they are powerful promises for you.