

# The Gospel of Matthew

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## Session 12: Matthew 11: Jesus Confronts an Evil Generation

NEXT WEEK: Ex 20:10, 1 Sam 21:1-6, Sir 51:23-26, Is 35:4-6, 62:1-2, Jn 1:11-13, 3:10, 1 Jn 5:3, CCC 679, 994, 1864, 2168-2172

Review: Jesus has commissioned the Twelve by sharing His power to heal and cast out demons. He also warned them of certain persecution. He also told them *Do not be afraid – those who persecute you cannot touch your soul, and God has overcome the world*

1. Matthew Chapters 11 and 12 provides the *narrative* of Book 3 where Jesus begins to speak in parables

2. Jesus answers the question of John the Baptist's messengers, not with a message to read Isaiah 26 but

with a list of the messianic prophecies: Isaiah 26: 19 (dead shall live); Isaiah 29: 18 (deaf shall hear);

Isaiah 35: 4-6 (Be strong; fear not; blind see, deaf hear, lamb leaps like a stag); Isaiah 61:1-2 (heal

broken hearted, liberty to captives, year of favor with the Lord, comfort to those who mourn); CCC 549

(*"by freeing some individuals from the earthly evils of hunger, injustice, illness and death, Jesus*

*performed messianic signs. Nevertheless, He did not come to abolish all evils here below, but to free men*

*from the gravest slaver, sin, which thwarts them in their vocation as God's sons and causes all forms of*

*human bondage."*)

3. After John's disciples left Him, Jesus begins to query the crowds about their perception of John. He

links the reply to Old Testament Malachi<sup>1</sup> 3:1; Jesus compares John to Elijah, the greatest of

prophets in OT, not as reincarnated but as the spirit of Elijah who was forerunner of Elisha,

Moses' forerunner for Joshua, so is John forerunner of the Messiah; not good to reject John as he

is preparing the way for the greatest of them all.

4. The current leadership has failed to lead the people, the people not listening anyway – called an "evil

generation"; Pharisees claim to have wisdom but Jesus states *"Wisdom is justified by her deeds."*;

Jesus intensity and fearlessness becomes more evident as he chastises specific cities deeds and

lack of repentance; likens Capernaum to Sodom; physical pain is nothing compared to the spiritual

dimension of sin – that is the rejection of the Son of Man, rejection of the Gospel

5. After chastising the Pharisees and the current generation, Jesus offers words of comfort (Matthew 11: 28

– 30); *"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke*

*upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for*

*yourselves. For my yoke is easy and my burden light."*

6. When the early church (and throughout church history), experienced trials, tribulations and discouraging

words, the faithful always responded with PRAYER – they *cry out* to the Lord; just like children

who are nervous, anxious or afraid, they want to be with their Mom or Dad, we want to be with

Jesus – no better place to be (think the aftermath of 911 or other horrible disasters and events)

7. In difficult times, we tend to freeze and have a sense of anxiety, depression, inability to move forward

but Jesus says, *"Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, I will give you rest."* That is

very comforting; However, in NT there is still a *yoke* to carry but great power is given to make the

burden light

8. In OT, *rest* meant you COULD NOT work on the Sabbath; NT (Matthew 12:1- 8) has Jesus and

Disciples picking grain on the Sabbath; Pharisees said was unlawful; Jesus uses OT connection

(1Samuel 21: 5 – 6 to David and his companions ate the *Bread of Offering* (only temple priests

could eat)<sup>2</sup> or the temple priest *serving at the temple altars* on the Sabbath – all were unlawful;

Jesus concludes *"I desire mercy, not sacrifice...For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath"*; Jesus

is establishing the new priesthood for the new Israel, the new Moses, the new Temple

9. 1Samuel 22:6 – 19 – Jesus cleverly is saying to Pharisees "Are you spying on me like Doeg? I am the

king, and these men are my priests of the new kingdom who are allowed to work on the Sabbath".

Jesus is establishing the new priesthood for the new covenant that will lift the burdens of the

people; setting the stage for a new temple (Jesus), a new type of sacrifice (the Eucharist) – this will

put them all out of a job and they begin plotting how to kill him

10. Matthew 12: 10 – 14 – Jesus goes into synagogue on Sabbath and demonstrates how the King and the

priests of new kingdom are all about lifting the burdens of the people; a man with a withered hand

was healed and Pharisees sought to kill him, but He left and many followed Him (fulfilled Isaiah

prophecy)

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11. Jesus healed blind and mute demoniac, but Pharisees passed rumors Jesus cured in name of Beelzebub, prince of demons; Jesus uses narrative and finishes by stating in verse 30, "*Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.*" And verse 36 "*I tell you, on the day of judgment people will render an account for every careless word they speak. By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.*"
12. The Pharisees are seeking a sign; Jesus states only a sign from Jonah<sup>3</sup> where he was in belly of whale for 3 days, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth; Jesus again speaks of the destruction of the temple and He is the new temple, the forever, indestructible temple; Jerusalem offered chance to repent just like Nineveh, but unlike Nineveh, they did not repent and were later destroyed.
13. Matthew 13 Jesus will continue to use parables to teach His message

<sup>1</sup> Book of Malachi (Hebrew expression meaning "*My Messenger*") written by anonymous writer just before arrival of Nehemiah into Jerusalem (455 B.C.) to conceal his identity; Historical value of the prophecy gives glimpse of life in the Jewish community upon their return from Babylon and is between period of Haggai and the reform measures of Ezra and Nehemiah. This book likely prepares the way for that reform to answer the question "*Where is the God of justice?*" Malachi makes it clear that a *forerunner* must come before the reform to prepare the *soil* for repentance and true worship. Gospel writers point to John the Baptizer as the forerunner ushering in the messianic age, the true day of the Lord. (St Joseph Edition of the New American Bible – Catholic Book Publishing Co.1991)

<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 21: 5 – 6 – The temple priests were from the tribe of Levite and each male, when of age, would serve in the temple for a specified time by drawing lots – they would leave their families and could not have any relations with women during that time; when David came and requested food, Ahimelech, the temple priest, stated only the only food was the *Holy Bread* in the temple (which was replaced every day and could only be eaten by the priests); the men could only have this if they had not had any relations with women; David assured Ahimelech that when the men were on an expedition or even a common journey, they abstained from relations.

<sup>3</sup> It tells of a Hebrew prophet named Jonah son of Amittai who is sent by God to prophesy the destruction of Nineveh but tries to escape the divine mission. Set in the reign of Jeroboam II (786–746 BC), it was probably written in the post-exilic period, sometime between the late 5th to early 4th century BC.

Jonah or Jonas<sup>[a]</sup> is the name given in the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh/Old Testament) to a prophet of the northern kingdom of Israel in about the 8th century BCE. He is the eponymous central figure of the Book of Jonah, in which he is called upon by God to travel to Nineveh and warn its residents of impending divine wrath. Instead, Jonah boards a ship to Tarshish. Caught in a storm, he orders the ship's crew to cast him overboard, whereupon he is swallowed by a giant fish. Three days later, after Jonah agrees to go to Nineveh, the fish vomits him out onto the shore. Jonah successfully convinces the entire city of Nineveh to repent but waits outside the city in expectation of its destruction. God shields Jonah from the sun with a plant, but later sends a worm to cause it to wither. When Jonah complains of the bitter heat, God rebukes him. In Judaism, the story of Jonah represents the teaching of *teshuva*, which is the ability to repent and be forgiven by God. In the New Testament, Jesus calls himself "greater than Jonah" and promises the Pharisees "the sign of Jonah", which is his resurrection. Early Christian interpreters viewed Jonah as a type for Jesus. Later, during the Reformation, Jonah came to be seen instead as an archetype for the "envious Jew". Jonah is regarded as a prophet in Islam and the biblical narrative of Jonah is repeated, with a few notable differences, in the Quran.

Mainstream Bible scholars generally regard the Book of Jonah as fictional<sup>[3]</sup> and often at least partially satirical,<sup>[4][5]</sup> but the character of Jonah may have been based on the historical prophet of the same name mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25. Although the word "whale" is often used in English versions of the Jonah story, the Hebrew text actually uses the phrase *dag gadol*, which means "giant fish". In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the species of the fish that swallowed Jonah was the subject of speculation for naturalists, who interpreted the story as an account of a historical incident.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonah>