**Monday Evening Bible Study**

**December 5, 2022 – Matthew 11:2-11**

**Immediate Context**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Matthew 5:1-7:29 The Sermon on the Mount | Matthew 12:9-14 The Man with the Withered Hand |
| Matthew 8:1-4 Jesus Cleanses a Leper | Matthew 12:15-21 God’s Chosen Servant |
| Matthew 8:5-13 Jesus Heals a Centurion’s Servant | Matthew 12:22-32 Jesus and Beelzebul |
| Matthew 8:14-17 Jesus Heals Many at Peter’s House | Matthew 12:33-37 A Tree and Its Fruit |
| Matthew 8:18-22 Would-Be Followers of Jesus | Matthew 12:38-42 The Sign of Jonah |
| Matthew 8:23-27 Jesus Stills the Storm | Matthew 12:43-45 The Return of an Unclean Spirit |
| Matthew 8:28-9:1 Jesus Heals the Gadarene Demoniacs | Matthew 12:46-50 The True Kindred of Jesus |
| Matthew 9:2-8 Jesus Heals a Paralytic | Matthew 13:1-9 The Parable of the Sower |
| Matthew 9:9-13 The Call of Matthew | Matthew 13:10-17 The Purpose of Parables |
| Matthew 9:14-17 The Question about Fasting | Matthew 13:18-23 The Parable of the Sower Explained |
| Matthew 9:18-26 A Girl Restored to Life & a Woman Healed | Matthew 13:24-30 The Parable of the Weeds among Wheat |
| Matthew 9:27-31 Jesus Heals Two Blind Men | Matthew 13:31-32 The Parable of the Mustard Seed |
| Matthew 9:32-34 Jesus Heals One Who Was Mute | Matthew 13::33 The Parable of the Yeast |
| Matthew 9:35-38 The Harvest is Great, the Laborers Few | Matthew 13:34-35 The Use of Parables |
| Matthew 10:1-11:1 Mission & Ministry of the Twelve Apostles | Matthew 13:36-43 Jesus Explains the Parable of the Weeds |
| **Matthew 11:2-6 Messengers from John the Baptist** | Matthew 13:44-50 Three Parables |
| **Matthew 11:7-19 Jesus Praises John the Baptist** | Matthew 13:51-53 Treasures New and Old |
| Matthew 11:20-24 Woes to Unrepentant Cities | Matthew 13:54-58 The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth |
| Matthew 11:25-30 Jesus Thanks His Father | Matthew 14:1-12 The Death of John the Baptist |
| Matthew 12:1-8 Plucking Grain on the Sabbath | Matthew 14:13-21 Feeding the Five Thousand |

**Helpful Scriptures**

**Malachi 3:1-3 (NRSV)**

1 See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. 2 But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap; 3 he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness.

**1 Kings 14:15 (NRSV)**

15 “The Lord will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; he will root up Israel out of this good land that he gave to their ancestors, and scatter them beyond the Euphrates, because they have made their sacred poles, provoking the Lord to anger.

**2 Kings 18:21 (NRSV)**

21 See, you are relying now on Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of anyone who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.

**3 Maccabees 2:22 (NRSV)**

22 He shook him on this side and that as a reed is shaken by the wind, so that he lay helpless on the ground and, besides being paralyzed in his limbs, was unable even to speak, since he was smitten by a righteous judgment.

**Key Words/Phrases**

**Prison** – Matthew mentioned John’s arrest in 4:12, but offered no explanation. In 14:1-12, Matthew tells us the story of Herod’s marriage, John’s criticism and subsequent arrest, and the dance that leads to John’s beheading. Josephus tells us John is imprisoned at Machaerus, Herod’s desert fortress east of the Dead Sea.

**Messiah** – “Messiah” is a transliteration of the Hebrew word for “anointed” מָשִׁיחַ. Anointing is the practice of pouring oil on the head of one who is being given a position of authority. It is used in the Old Testament to describe Prophets, Priests, and Kings (all people of authority). See Leviticus 4:3 (Priest); 1 Samuel 24:6 (King); 1 Chronicles 16:22 (Prophet). Isaiah 45:1 used the word to describe the King of Persia as YHWH’s anointed.

**Christ** – “Christ” is a transliteration of the Greek word for “anointed” Χριστός.

**Disciple** – μαθητής – literally an “apprentice, learner” someone attached to a teacher or a movement. Rabbis, like Jesus, had disciples and John the Baptist had his own disciples.

**The One Who is to Come** – The Jewish people looked forward to the coming of the Messiah—the anointed one who would bring salvation—but they thought of the Messiah as a great king like David, a warrior who would restore Israel to its former glory. John prophesied in chapter 3 that one was coming after him who was more powerful than him (Matthew 3:11-12). After Jesus’ baptism, the heavens opened and the Spirit descended like a dove, and a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). But clearly John expects a fire-and-brimstone messiah. But Jesus has pronounced blessing on the poor, the meek, and the peacemakers (5:1-11). He has called his disciples to love their enemies (5:42-48). He has warned them not to judge others (7:1-5). Jesus also set up shop, not in Jerusalem, but in Galilee (Matthew 4:12). Then Jesus worked a series of healing ministries which greatly affected those healed but didn’t do much for the nation. John keeps hoping to see fireworks, but thus far has been disappointed. Also, John is in prison. If he is the one to prepare the way, why hasn’t he been rescued? John expresses doubts, but is willing to listen and learn; open to hear what Jesus has to say.

**Tell John what you hear and see** – A look at the context tells us that what they heard was the Sermon on the Mount, chapters 5-7, and what they saw was the many healings, chapters 8-9.

**Blind, lame, deaf, dead, poor** – Isaiah 29:18 speaks of the deaf hearing and the blind seeing. Isaiah 35:6 speaks of the lame leaping like a deer. Isaiah 26:19 speaks of the dead living. Isaiah 61:1 speaks of good news for the oppressed, the brokenhearted, captives, and prisoners. These are signs of the Messiah’s coming. Jesus does all these things and more (see context above). Jesus will get to the fire and brimstone in Matthew 24-25, but first is establishing a ministry to the lost sheep of Israel.

**Blessed is anyone who takes no offense at** **me** – The word for “offense” is σκανδαλίζω which literally means “cause to sin” or “cause to stumble” or “to be a stumbling block.” Used as a metaphor for falling away. It’s the root from where we get the word “scandalized.” John hasn’t taken offense but has expressed doubts. Soon, people will take offense—hometown folks (13:57), Pharisees (12:1-8; 12:24; 15:12) and even his disciples will desert him when the chips are down (26:31-33). Yet, Jesus offers the blessing, not just to John, but to all who do not take offense—all who do not stumble—all who are not scandalized.

**Reed, soft robes, royal palaces** –The references to a reed, soft robes, and royal palaces point to Herod Antipas. Herod’s coins include the symbol of a reed. He wears fine clothing and lives in palaces, including Machaerus. Reeds were used figuratively for what was weak and undependable in times of trouble (1 Kings 14:15; 2 Kings 18:21; 3 Maccabees 2:22). John is far from a reed that gets blown by the wind.

**Verse 10** – Jesus quotes Malachi 3:1 but notice what is left off the quote (see above). Whenever a rabbi would quote scripture, the context around it (what comes before and after) is supposed to also come to people’s minds. Like, if I were to say, “Four score and seven years ago…” or “I pledge allegiance to the flag…” or “You’re in good hands…” or “Like a good neighbor…” People were expected to recognize the quote and what comes with it.

**Verse 11 –** Jesus declares John to be not only the greatest prophet, but the greatest figure ever. Think about what Jesus is saying about John in terms of Abraham, Moses, and David. Why? Does it have to do with John’s place in history? And what exactly is Jesus saying about the least? Where does this place us?