

Dwelling in the Word

Prayerfully read Matt 11:1-30 and ask: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? 2) What does this say about what God desires to accomplish in you? 3) How could you respond to what God says in this passage?

Beginning the Conversation

1. Think about your days as a pre-believer. Can you remember any questions you had about the faith before committing fully to following Jesus? What were they and how did you go about seeking clarity?
2. Think about your days as a *new believer* and follower of Christ. Who was instrumental in the beginning of your faith journey? How did they share and model a new kingdom way of living for you?

Digging Deeper *(pick some of the following questions to discuss as a group)*

1. Read the sections that connect with John the Baptist's time of imprisonment under Antipas in 4:12, 11:1-6, and 14:1-12. With these passages in mind, and what you know of John from the other gospels, Which of the following four possible reasons for John's confusion seem probable to you? Any other possible reasons?
 - Surprise at Jesus' seemingly free attitude toward religious conventions and his socializing with 'sinners'
 - Expectation that Israel's Messiah would be overtly destabilizing in a political sense, standing up to Rome
 - Anticipation of a fiery judge Messiah, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire in justice
 - Hope that Jesus as a Messiah who 'sets prisoners free' should break him out
2. How does Jesus' public confirmation and elevation of John in verses 7-15 tell you about how he feels about those who are honestly and earnestly seeking clarity from him?
3. In verses 17-20 'this generation' makes misjudgments about both John the Baptizer and Jesus. What do you think are the most common misjudgments that people make about Jesus or Christianity in '*our generation*'? Have you been able to shed some light on any of these misjudgments in inter-faith conversations?
4. In the warning passage of 20-24, Jesus rebukes the non-repentant towns strongly. Now read Matt 7:1-5. What is your experience of holding the tension of both Jesus' role as 'Just Judge' and our call to not judge?
5. Look at verses 25-30. Can you distinguish the prayer, statement, and invitation in these verses?
6. Read 28-30. What are the three verbs that Jesus' hearers are invited to do? What two adjectives does Jesus use to describe himself? And what 2 describe his "yoke"? Which of these most encourage or challenge you?

Living it Out

1. It seems Jesus' invitation is not to go from being un-yoked to yoked, but to a choice of what yoke to be under. Read John 8:34-36. Bring any areas of your life where you feel the enslavement of sin to Christ Jesus and trade it for his yoke which brings freedom and help. Now read Romans 6:17-18, 22.
2. Read Psalm 24 then Hebrews 4:16 and meditate on the royal language used. What do you need from Jesus, your King, today? As his loyal subject, approach his throne in prayer. He is listening with love.

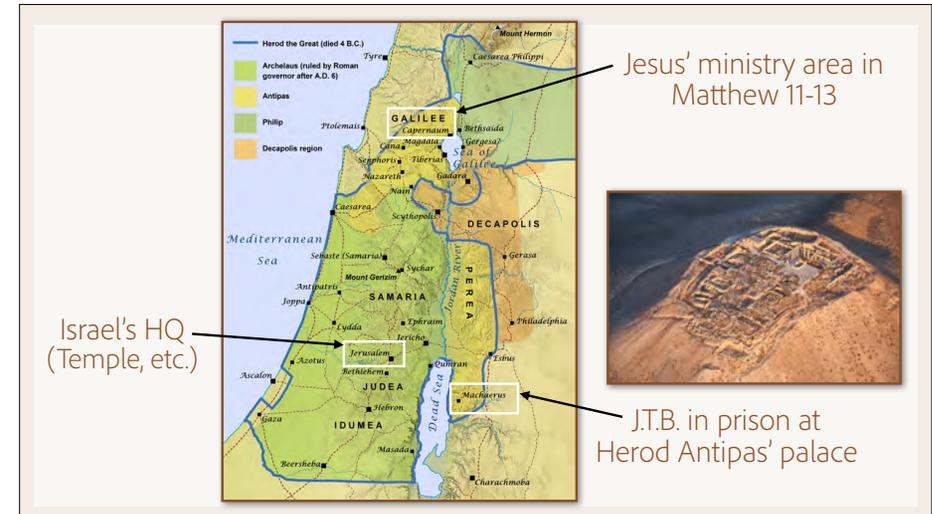
Reaction: Seeking Clarity (11:1-6)

Who: J.T.B. (via his disciples)

What: A question around the 'ultimateness' of Jesus

When: After J.T.B.'s imprisonment but before his execution

Where: Antipas' palace prison (in Machaerus, Perea)



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Why: Confusion around his own expectations

Matthew 11:7-15:

As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John:

"What did you go out into the wilderness to see?

A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see?

A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces.

Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and **more than a prophet**.

This is the one about whom it is written:

**"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you."**

Truly I tell you, among those born of women **there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist**, yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is **the Elijah who was to come**.

Whoever has ears, let them hear.

Reaction: Misjudgment (11:16-19)

Who: "This generation"

What: False accusations

When: During J.T.B.'s and Jesus' ministry

Where: Throughout Israel (Roman Palestine)

Why: J.T.B. *nor* Jesus met their "expectations"

Reaction: Non-repentance (11:20-24)

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What: Explicit rejection of Jesus

When: After encountering Jesus' kingdom work

Where: North of the Sea of Galilee



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Why: Unwillingness to change

Reaction: Cooperation (11:25-30)

Who: The "little children" disciples, the weary/burdened

What: Receiving the King, along with his work *and way*

When: After encountering Christ *and* coming to him



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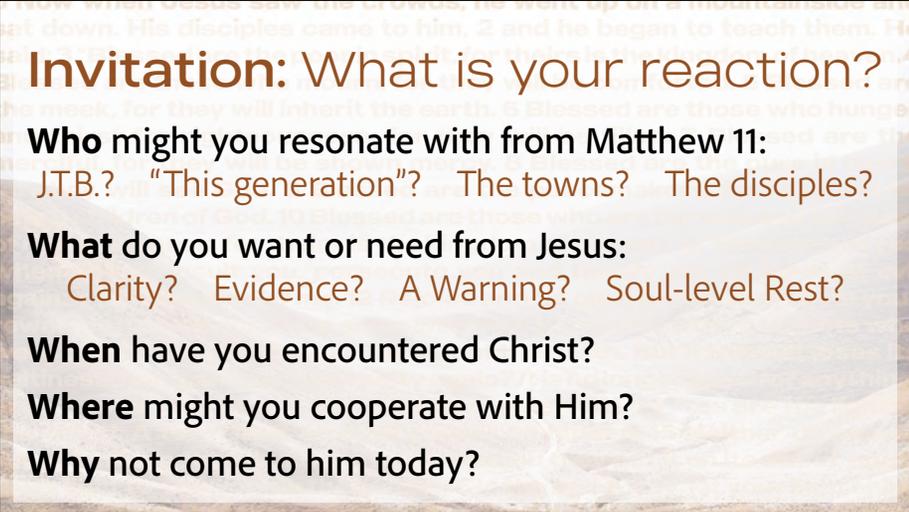
Who: The "little children" disciples, the weary/burdened

What: Receiving the King, along with his work *and way*

When: After encountering Christ *and* coming to him

Where: Anywhere?

Why: Willingness to change, and be a "subject"



Invitation: What is your reaction?

Who might you resonate with from Matthew 11:

J.T.B.? "This generation"? The towns? The disciples?

What do you want or need from Jesus:

Clarity? Evidence? A Warning? Soul-level Rest?

When have you encountered Christ?

Where might you cooperate with Him?

Why not come to him today?