

Judgement Begins Today

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Date: 28 February 2021

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[0 : 00] Let's turn to our Bibles now, come to our Bible reading, and we're in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 11. Willie's been preaching from this section of Matthew over the past few weeks, and we're coming into chapter 11, which is really all about the way that divides, the way that divides.

Matthew 11, and we're going to read through the whole chapter together. Hear the word of the Lord. When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.

Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?

And Jesus answered them, Go and tell John what you hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk. Lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear.

And the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me. As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John.

[1 : 18] What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out and see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in king's houses.

What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.

Truly I say to you, among those born of women, there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who 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 suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

[2 : 30] But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates.

We played the flute for you, and you did not dance. We sang a dirge, and you did not mourn. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say he has a demon.

The son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, look at him, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.

Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!

For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

[3 : 42] And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you. At that time, Jesus declared, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. And no one knows the Son except the Father.

And no one knows the Father except the Son. And anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden.

And I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and lowly in heart. And you will find rest for your souls.

[5 : 00] For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Amen. Amen. And may God bless to us this, his word. Well, do turn with me to Matthew chapter 11.

Jesus said, I have not come to bring peace to the earth, but a sword. A sword to pierce the hearts of men and women. And to bring separation with eternal consequences.

The way of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven is the way that divides. Now the early chapters of Matthew's gospel show us Jesus proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom through all the towns and cities of Galilee himself.

Followed then by the sending out of the 12 to join that same mission to Israel then. And that anticipates the great commission to come. And he's preparing his followers for that in the teaching that we've been looking at the last few weeks in Matthew chapter 10.

Teaching that is stark and realistic about what gospel mission will be like. In terms of the costly separations that Christ's people will experience.

[6 : 19] And yet at the same time it's also wonderfully comforting. In that promise of unbroken union with Jesus himself. Whoever receives you, he says, receives me. And those who love you and those whom you love for my sake.

You will never lose out ultimately. Chapter ends with those wonderful words. He will by no means lose his reward. But what Matthew now shows to us with increasing clarity in chapter 11 and 12. Is a display of these differing and these dividing reactions to Jesus. Followed then by Jesus' own teaching in chapter 13.

In the parables of the kingdom. Where he explains these differing reactions. And why it is that his kingdom's arrival seems to bring not immediate peace and paradise.

But rather instead so often perplexity and pain. And what we see here in chapter 11 especially. Is the perplexing rejection of Jesus by the very people.

[7 : 33] Who should have welcomed him most joyfully of all. The nation of Israel. And above all the religious leaders. Of the people. And these chapters show us a great turning point.

A moment of destiny. For the Israel of Jesus' day. For this generation. As he calls them in verse 16. And then repeatedly through chapter 12.

Their determined. And ultimate rejection of Jesus. Is foreshadowed here. Look at chapter 12. Verse 14. They conspired against him.

How to destroy him. And therefore. As verse 15 there in chapter 12. Goes on to say. Even more ominously. And terribly. Jesus.

Withdrew himself. From them. Fulfilling. Fulfilling. Fulfilling. Fulfilling. Fulfilling. The words of Isaiah. The prophet. Predicting. That it would be to the Gentile world.

[8 : 34] Not. Among the Israelites. That chiefly. It seems. The hope. That is in Jesus. Would find its true home. And that's one of the great mysteries of history.

That the way of God's redemption for this world. Is tied so closely. To the faith. Of Israel. But also. To the unbelief of Israel.

The very thing that. That opens. The door of salvation. To the Gentiles. And yet. So it is. The prophets foretold it. And of course. The apostle Paul. Lays that out.

So majestically. In Romans. Nine to eleven. But these chapters here. That we're looking at. Are rooted in history. They're rooted in Jesus. Earthly ministry.

But as we've seen already. In chapter ten. They're preserved for us. In our time. And they speak to all times. And indeed to all cultures.

[9 : 34] And to all nations alike. Because always. When God's word collides. With his world. There is. Confrontation.

When it collides. With the thinking. The attitudes. The morality. And the religion of this world.

There'll be convulsions. There will be confrontation. There will be. Crisis.

As indeed. There was here. When the people of that generation. Faced. God's. Ultimate message. To the world. In the person. Of the son of God himself. In Jesus Christ.

And reactions. Sometimes. Worse. Surprising. Perplexing. And sometimes. Violent. And always. Always. Of eternal.

Significance. And here. In chapter. Eleven. That we've read. The message. Is loud. And clear. No one. No nation. No generation. Can presume.

[10:32] Forever. Upon the grace. And the mercy. Of God. He has. Set a day. For judgment. And that. Judgment. Has now. Begun.

In. The proclamation. Of the gospel. Of Jesus Christ. And every generation. Must make up. Its mind. About Christ. And about his kingdom.

And that time. Says Matthew. To all of us. Who are reading his gospel. That time. Is today. Because judgment. Begins. Today. May. And the chapter.

Here. Falls into. Three sections. Each one. Shows us. A different. Reaction. To Jesus. And the proclamation. Of his kingdom. And his rule. So let's look at them in turn. First of all.

In Jesus. Dealing with the reaction. Shown by John the Baptist. To Jesus ministry. In verses 1 to 15. A reaction. Of honest. Perplexity. And the point here.

[11:29] Is that. The true message. Of Jesus. And his kingdom. Can at times. Cause honest doubts. Even among. The greatest. Of believers. And Jesus says. John. Was the greatest.

In history. Right up until that time. In verse 11. Now we mustn't get sidetracked. And draw up. All kinds of blind alleys here. Focusing on John's state of mind.

Becoming psychoanalyst. Was John depressed? Was John backsliding? All of that sort of thing. No. It's quite clear. In the context here. What the issue is. And we see that.

From how Jesus responds. To the questions. That John's followers. Come to him with. And Jesus responds. Both. With a message. For John himself. And also. With a word to the crowds.

About John. Let's take the latter of those first. Verse 7. Jesus began. To speak to the crowds. Concerning John. And he makes clear. That he has no criticism.

[12:26] Of John. Rather. He proclaims John. Not only as the greatest prophet. But more than that. Verse 11. The greatest man. In history. Up until.

That day. So clearly. For Jesus. John's question. John's doubting. Is not. Wavering in unbelief. He's a solid believer.

As solid. As you can find. And that's Jesus point. In verses 7 to 9. He's contrasting John. With Herod. His enemy. His captor.

Read more about. What happened. With Herod and John. In chapter 14. Herod was. A man. Wearing soft clothing. And living in a palace.

Herod was. A reed. Shaken by the wind. That was a mocking nickname. That people used. Of Herod. Meaning he was an old fox. A politician. Who wavered this way. And that.

[13:19] Whatever way. The popular mood changed. Just as all politicians do. Herod actually. Had had. Some special coins. Minted. With his own face on them. And with a symbol.

Of a reed. On it. To him. It was. Symbolizing. Wisdom. And durability. But. But people. Had turned that image. Against him. To mock him. Filled it with irony. That's what people do.

Isn't it? With politicians. Remember. Strong. And stable leadership. Poor old. Theresa May. It just became. A mockery for her. Flipping this way.

And that. And all the rest of it. With all the Brexit stuff. That's what people do. And that's what they did. To John. To Herod. And here. Jesus is saying. John. The Baptist. Is the very antithesis.

Of what you see in Herod. He was not soft. He was not swayed. This way and that. John. Was rock solid. God. And there was no one. Greater.

[14:17] And yet. There's no question here. Is there. That John had doubts. About how he saw. The ministry of Jesus. Unfolding. And it's not.

Not difficult. At all. To understand. Why? Because. If Jesus is the Messiah. If God's kingdom. Has at last come. The great day. Of the Lord. That John had proclaimed.

To everyone. Was at hand. Remember that's what he said. Back in chapter 3. Verse 12. His winnowing fork. Of judgment. Will be in his hand. To judge. The righteous.

And the wicked. To usher in the glory. Of that prophetic hope. The new creation. That we've been waiting for. But if all that is true. Then where was all that?

Why was John. In prison. Under a wicked king. And why hadn't Jesus. Done anything about that? And where was the judgment.

[15:13] That was going to put. All wrongs. In the world right. It's very understandable. Why John should be so perplexed. And of course.

That's the same perplexity. Isn't it? That genuine. Believing people. Have wrestled with. Ever since. If Jesus really is God. If his kingdom has come.

If he rules. High in the heavens. Well why. Is there still so much. Suffering in our world. So much injustice. So much evil. Don't you find.

Sometimes. That that perplexes you. And sometimes. It's very personal. Isn't it? Why. Is my sickness. Not being healed. Or the sickness.

Of my dear loved one. That I pray for. So much. Why did God. Allow my loved one. To die. So. Prematurely. My mother. Or my father. Or even worse.

[16:08] Perhaps. My son. Or my daughter. My baby. There's so many things. That are perplexing to us. About. The message.

Of the kingdom. That we do believe in. That we do trust. That. But these things. Can at times. Can't they. Rob us. Of our. Of our real assurance.

Of our peace. And they can make us. Begin to doubt. Doubt that. Perhaps. Jesus can. Or will. Ever really do. All the things. That he promised to do.

To make this world right. To end the curse. To really overcome. Sin. The sin. In my heart. And the fruit. In my life.

Sometimes. That's such a powerful. Cause of doubt. Isn't it? The sense. There's so much struggle. There's so. So little. Of that glorious. Triumph. And victory. Over sin. In my own life.

[17:04] That Jesus promises. But. As Jesus. Will go on. To explain. So necessarily. And in great detail. In the parables.

Of. Of chapter 13. His kingdom. Still has. A not yet. Aspect. To it. It's begun.

Yes. He is. The conqueror. Of all evil. His rule. Has begun. On this earth. As it is in heaven. But he has not yet.

Brought. This world. To its final close. This age. And so. While he is patient. So as to be gracious. And merciful. So as to offer. Salvation. To this world. In his gospel. Well. While he is patiently. Doing that. There are many things.

[17:59] That are still wrong. That are still unjust. That are still tainted. By sin and evil. There's plenty of evidence. Of that. All around us. All the time.

And yet. There is also. Ample. Evidence. To strengthen faith. To dispel doubts. To give us assurance. That Jesus Christ.

Will never. Disappoint us. Look at. Look at Jesus. Direct response. To John. Now. In verse 4. Go and tell John.

What you see. And what you hear. The words. And the works. Of Jesus Christ. In verse 5. The promises. Of the scriptures. Are being fulfilled.

In him. The blind. The lame. The lepers. Are being healed. The dead. Are raised. Just as. Isaiah chapter 35. Promised. And Isaiah chapter 61.

[18:55] Is being fulfilled. Good news. Proclaimed. To the poor. And you have seen that. And you have heard it. With your own eyes and ears. Even though.

The judgment. That was also promised. Is not yet. Being seen. So keep trusting in me. Says Jesus. And friends.

That is always. The real answer. Isn't it? To our. Honest doubts. And our fears. And our. Our lack of assurance. The answer is not. Lectures. About the doctrine. Of assurance.

Jesus says. Look to me. Hear about me. Hear more about me. Fill your mind. And your heart. With what the scriptures. Say of me. And what you have seen. And heard.

In me. Notice that Jesus. Doesn't give John. A detailed explanation. Of his own. Personal circumstances. And they'll often be.

[19:53] Very perplexing. Things in our lives. That we don't. Ever. Come to understand. There'll be questions. That are never answered. For us. In this age. Church. But there is.

Always. Enough. Jesus has done enough. He's revealed enough. For John. To go on. Trusting. In him. Right until the end.

And for us. Likewise. Perhaps some of us. Need to hear that. Very. Especially. Just today. Perhaps we're. Feeling. Lacking an assurance.

Or wrecked with doubts. Well Jesus says. Take comfort. These things. Are not. A barrier. To real. Faith. In Jesus.

There's always. More than enough. Evidence. To trust him. And to go on. Trusting him. You just need to keep. On. Hearing. The gospel. Again.

[20 : 47] And again. Faith. Comes. By hearing. Says the apostle Paul. And John says. Doesn't he. At the very end. Of his gospel. That these things. Are written. So that you might.

Have. Believe. And so that you might. Have. Life. In his name. John wrote his first letter. Do you remember. To you who believe. To real believers.

So that you might know. That you have. Eternal life. Because the assurance. And the reassurance. That we constantly need. It comes. In the word.

Of the gospel. Again. And again. And again. That is how. Our doubts. And our fears. Are assuaged. So that's. You today.

Then Jesus. Turns to you. Just as he turned. To John the Baptist. And he says. Look to me. Listen to me. To all the manifest. Evidence. That there is. Of my word.

[21 : 41] At work. In this world. All over the world. This same gospel. Is bearing fruit. And growing. That's what Paul. Says to reassure.

The Colossians. Take heart. Keep trusting. In Jesus Christ. There is. Every reason. To do so. I find it wonderful.

Don't you. How. Kind. And how gentle. Jesus is. With John. And he is. Kind and gentle. With those who love him. But who are at times.

Honestly. Perplexed. Perplexed. He is kind. And he is comforting. But he is also. Gently warning here. Isn't he. In verse six. Blessed is the one.

Who is not. Offended. By me. Or. NIV has it. Who doesn't fall away. On account of me. Because they are disappointed. At not yet.

[22 : 37] Seeing. All the things. That they wanted to see. And believing in me. But there is. Ample. Evidence. To trust.

In Jesus Christ. So we must trust him. And not fall away. Because we refuse. The evidence. Or because we. Persist. In refusing. These words of truth.

That he gives to us. But sadly. There are. Also those who do. Do that. And there have been. From the very beginning. And that's what we see here.

In verses 16 to 24. Because. This next reaction. To Jesus. Shown here. Is not one of. Honest perplexity. But it's one of. Hardened perversity.

And the message. Of Jesus. And his kingdom. Is. Sometimes met. Often. Perhaps. With hardened derision. Even among. Even among. The people.

[23 : 33] Most privileged. By God himself. In the very history. Of the world. And that is what this generation. That Jesus speaks of here. In verse 16.

Were. They had received. In person. The two greatest. Messengers. From God. Of all time. John the Baptist. The greatest prophet. And now.

The son. Of God himself. And yet. Like. Petulant children. In a sock. That refused them both. That's the picture. Isn't it? In verses 16 and 17.

Picture. Of grumpy. Whining. Children. After a late night. Verse 17. I wanted to play at weddings. And you wouldn't play with me.

And then. I wanted to play at funerals. And you still wouldn't play with me. You see. There's a vast difference. Isn't there? Between honest doubts.

[24 : 31] And hardened derision. The derision. Of sheer unbelief. Sheer rejection. Of the gospel. However that gospel. Is presented. See. John came. Verse 18. With a solemn note.

Of repentance. In his preaching. And he was written. Off. As a fire and brimstone preacher. Oh. He's got a demon. They scorned. His. His austere lifestyle.

They scorned. His. His solemn message. Oh. He's one of those. Doer. Scottish Calvinists. What they say today. Isn't it? But then. Verse 19.

You see. Jesus came. Emphasizing the grace. And the mercy. And the sheer joy. That the gospel message. Is full of also. And yet. He's met. With exactly. The same derision. Just in different words. He's written off. As being frivolous. And lightweight. Look at him. Partying. With those. Text collectors. And sinners. He's one of those. Happy. Clappy. Fundamentalists. You see.

[25 : 27] When your heart. Is set. Against. Jesus. And his kingdom. And its demands. And its challenges. In your life. You will find fault. With whatever way. That message is proclaimed.

To you. You'll dislike. The preacher. Or you'll dislike. The songs. That are sung. Or you'll be angry. About the welcome. At the door.

Oh it was far too friendly. It was too in your face. Or as it was. Oh it was far too cold. No one spoke to me. In that church. And you see. On and on it goes. On and on. And here.

We see this. Incredibly. Privileged. Generation. Perversely. And persistently. Refusing. In the gospel of Christ. They oppose.

John's call. To repent. And. Jesus' call. To rejoice. With equal hostility. God's wisdom.

[26 : 22] Jesus speaks of. In verse 19. His gospel word. To our world. It includes both. Of these emphases. The solemn. Piercing summons.

To repent. Or perish. But also. The joyful proclamation. Of mercy. And grace. In Jesus Christ. And yet. Astonishingly. People oppose. Both. Just the same.

And so. You see. Jesus says. There are consequences. Which can't. Be. Avoided. What follows there. In verse 20. Is unavoidable. You cannot.

Presume. Forever. On God's mercy. And grace. You cannot. Play the petulant. Child. With God. Forever. There is. A price. To be paid.

For opposition. To Jesus Christ. And his kingdom. And that price. Is a judgment. Whose magnitude. And whose severity.

[27 : 21] Is directly. Proportional. To the dimension. Of the privilege. Of revelation. And opportunity. That has been. So perversely. Scorned.

And rejected. These towns. And cities. Of Galilee. Were the. Most privileged. Places. On earth. The son of God.

Himself. Had done his most. Mighty. Wonders. And works. There. Verse 20. And verse 1. Tells us. Doesn't it. That he himself. Had taught them.

And he preached. To them. Above all. They were spoiled. With the gospel. From the world's. Greatest. Ever. Preacher. And teacher. And yet.

In the main. There was nothing. But total. Rejection. It is astounding. And yet.

[28 : 16] In a strange way. Friends. It's also. Encouraging to us. Isn't it. As Christian witnesses. When we find. That the response. To our message. Is mixed at best. It's not.

Because. We are not. Communicating. It skillfully enough. It's not. Because. We don't have enough. Understanding. Of the culture. And all the rest of it. And use the right words. And the right persuasiveness.

And all that nonsense. It is simply. Because. People. Always. Reject. Jesus Christ. Even. When. He himself. Is the preacher. And the miracle worker. And. It's even more. Damning. Here isn't it. Look at verse 21. Jesus says. That even.

The worst. Pagan cities. Would have. Responded. And repented. If they had been given. The vast weight of evidence. That these had been given.

[29 : 11] Tyre and Sidon. These are cities. Repeatedly. Denounced. By the Old Testament. Prophets. As the epitome. Of the arrogant. Evil nations. Read Isaiah.

Chapter 23. Or. Ezekiel. Chapters 26. To 28. And you'll see. And notice. Jesus says. That far worse. Than the heinous.

And overt wickedness. And the savagery. And the immorality. Of rank paganism. Far worse. Is. The refusal. Of the true gospel.

Of Jesus. By these good living. Moral. And religious people. Isn't that striking? Verse 24. It will be far worse.

For you. You upright people. On the day of judgment. Than for Sodom. That byword. For filth. And degradation. And arrogant. Self-sufficiency.

[30 : 06] And utter pride. The denunciation. Against Capernaum. There in verse 23. Jesus home base. The home base. Of his ministry. It uses words.

Quoted from the prophet Isaiah. From Isaiah 14. About God's judgment. On the king of Babylon. And Babylon. Is a repeated image. All through the Bible. Of the city.

Of evil. The city of Satan. The enemy. At war. With God. And his people. It's the fount. Of everything. That is corrupt. And is vicious.

And Jesus says to them. Be as religious. As you like. Be as. As ethical. As you like. Talk about ethics. Talk about good. Living. Talk about. ESG. Investing. Talk about.

Climate care. Talk about. Promoting equality. Talk about. Every other. Virtue. That your culture. Today extols. But if you. Refuse me.

[31 : 04] And the gospel. Of my kingdom. Verse 23. You will be. Brought down. To Hades. You will. Go to. Hell. And that will be.

A worse. Place. For you. And for all. These foreign. Pagans. That you. Despise. Because you. Have had. Such.

A full. Revelation. Of the truth. And yet. You spat it. Back in my face. It's very sobering.

Isn't it? But Jesus. Is saying. That is where. Hardened. Unbelief. And perversity. Leads. Nowhere else. But hell. Eternal.

And it's sobering. Surely. For us. Here today. And for our city. And for our nation. And for the west. As a whole. Because we have had. Centuries. Of gospel truth.

[32 : 03] Scotland. Is a country. With a gospel heritage. Of huge. Privilege. The motto. Of our city. In Glasgow. Is let. Glasgow. Flourish. By the preaching. Of your word.

And the praising. Of your name. And friends. Glasgow. Did flourish. As a great. Trading city. Of the empire. What have we done.

With that privilege. It's very chilling. If you read. About the city. Of Tyre. In Ezekiel. Chapter 27. It was the gateway. To the sea.

It was a great. Merchant city. It was a city. That built ships. And traded the world. And ruled the waves. But God said. Because your heart. Is proud. And you have said.

I am a God. I will take it. All away. And you. Will go. Down. To the pit. Well.

[33 : 01] Britannia. Once. Ruled the waves. And Glasgow. Once prospered. As a great. Merchant city. Well.

Not so today. As Phil was praying. The only accolade. That we wear today. As Glasgow. Is that we are. The drugs. Death. Capital. Of Europe. And like.

And like. Capernaum. And Bethesda. Our city. And our nation. Has been among. The most privileged. On this earth. In terms of access.

To the gospel of Christ. For centuries. Peace. But it's a measure. Isn't it. Of where we've come to today. That our government.

In the midst of all. That we're going through. Fiercely. Protects. The access. To abortion. To killing our babies. In the womb. Fiercely. Protects. The access. To off licenses.

[33 : 58] But bans. The access. To church services. Where the people of this city. Can come and worship. The living God. What will Jesus say.

Of this generation. Of our generation. In our city. On the day of judgment. Will he say. It will be more. Tolerable. For the land of Sodom.

Than for you. More tolerable. For Muslim Pakistan. And Iran. And Arabia. Than once. Christian Scotland. More tolerable.

For communist China. Than for you. Jesus words. Are deadly serious. Friends. They are a deadly. Serious warning.

Against. The hardened. Perversity. And a greatly. Privileged. City. And nation. And friends.

[34 : 59] We need to take that. Seriously. Especially. Especially. All of us. Who have had the great privilege. Of being brought up. In the midst of a church. And surrounded. By the gospel. From our infancy.

Do not you. Fail. To repent. Don't you. Fail. To bow your knee. To the Lord of heaven and earth. Who claims you. For his own.

With that great privilege. That you have been given. Comes great. Great responsibility. To respond. Not.

With hardening. And pride. But as Jesus calls you to do. In humility. And in penitence. And that's where the chapter ends.

Do you see. With a very different response. To Jesus. Urged. By the Savior himself. A response of humble penitence. That we see in verses 25 to 30.

[35 : 59] It's a wonderful truth. That the message of Jesus. Is also met. Not. Just with hardened derision. But with real. Heartfelt desire. Even among the most lowly.

Even among the least valued souls. In this world. Because. Receiving the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Is emphatically. Not. A matter of cleverness.

Or of aptitude. Or of moral virtue. It is solely. A matter of God's gracious revelation. To those who will leave their pride behind.

And who will throw all their hopes. On him. Verse 25. Makes quite clear. That understanding. And grasping.

The gospel of Jesus. Is not a matter of. Of intellect. And of aptitude. It's not about worthiness. It's about willingness. Willingness to come.

[36 : 57] To Jesus Christ. There will always be. The perverse. Who will refuse Christ. And alas. Often it is. The world they wide. With all. All their wisdom.

Who love. Their own wisdom. And their learning. Too much. But also. Always. There will be. Those. Whose eyes. God.

Will open. And cause them. To come to him. For rest. How ironic. It is. That the rest. That Jesus speaks of here.

Is the great promise. Of the Old Testament law. And the prophets. Way back. When Israel were slaves. In Egypt. God promised them. A land of rest. Where he would bring them.

And he would dwell. In the midst of them. When great. David became king. And Solomon. After him. At last. There was a kingdom. Of rest. And peace. Although of course. It was only. Only so fleeting. And brief.

[37 : 50] But the prophets. Like Isaiah. Promised. That at last. The root of Jesse. A new David. The Messiah. Would come. And establish his kingdom.

And of him. He said. Of his rest. It shall be glorious. The very heart. Of the Bible.

Of Israel. Longed. For this rest. Of God. To come. And yet. These. So-called. Lovers.

Of that law. Rejected. Jesus. When he came. Offering it to them. Because you see. They had emptied. Their law.

Their Bible. Of the presence. Of God. And it is. His presence. Alone. That can give rest. And that rejection.

[38 : 44] Of God himself. Was proved. So starkly. When the presence. Of Jesus. So enraged them. That they. They conspired. To kill him. And yet.

In the midst. Of that. And in the midst. Of Jesus. Pronouncement. Of judgment. On that awful wickedness. And rejecting him. As savior and lord. Still. Well. He's urging them.

Even those. Who are still. Rejecting him. Still so thorough. To their religious rules. That have become. So heavy. So burdensome. On them. So emptied. Of the real purpose.

Of it all. The real fellowship. With God himself. But he is urging them. To come to him. Verse 28. To allow. The joy. And the wonder. And the warmth. Of his presence.

To melt. Their hard hearts. To bend. Their rigid pride. Their religious hardness. And to lead them. At last. Into God's promised rest. That's what real repentance.

[39 : 43] And faith is. It's just that. It's humble penitence. That comes to him. That bows the head. To receive his yoke.

To bow to his rule. Knowing that his yoke. Is not harsh. And hard. But it's easy. It is suffused. With such gentleness. And love.

Not that it's a. An anything goes. Kind of life. He's not saying that. It's quite the reverse. We've seen that already. It costs everything. To follow Jesus. But it is.

The very antithesis. Of a sterile. Religious code. Of rules. And regulations. And endless burdens. No.

Jesus says. It is a relationship. Of love. With a savior king. Who came. To make you whole again. So that we will know life. In all its fullness.

[40 : 38] As human life. Was created to be. Our true human destiny. But it's hidden. As verse 25 says.

From so many. Whose pride. And whose own sense of wisdom. Has just blinded them. And hardened them. And yet it's revealed.

Says Jesus. So wonderfully. To all. Who will come. To know the son. Who alone. Can open our eyes. To the gracious love.

Of our true father in heaven. Verse 27. No one knows the father. Except the son. And anyone. To whom. The son. Chooses.

To reveal him. But that. Wonderful revelation. Is freely offered. Says Jesus. To all. Who labor. To all. Who are heavy laden. Who will come to him.

[41 : 37] And who will receive. That wonderful gift. Under his rule forever. Three. Clear. And very different reactions.

To the gospel of Jesus. And to Jesus himself. Honest perplexity. Hardened. Perversity. And humble penitence. And the same gospel.

Meets just those same. Responses today. Because the gospel is ever. A double edged sword. Of invitation. And of promise. But also.

Of warning. And of judgment. And always. Both together. And so as verse 15 says. He who has ears to hear.

Let him hear. Let me just say two things. As we close. Two things that we must all. Make sure that we do hear. Today. And that we are very very clear about.

[42 : 37] First. We must not miss. The significance of Jesus words. To John. Despite John's perplexity. Jesus is quite clear. The last judgment. Has begun.

Look at verses 12 to 14. John was. The Elijah to come. Promised by. The prophet Malachi. And that promise. Of Malachi chapter 4.

Is fulfilled. God's day of judgment. Has broken. In. The preaching. Of the gospel. Of the kingdom. Of the kingdom. And so the generation. That Jesus is addressing.

Is being judged. Now. By their response. To Jesus preaching. A violent collision. Is taking place. Verse 12.

The kingdom is suffering violence. It's coming violently. As the footnote says. Because there are violent reactions. To it. And that's because. Although Jesus does point.

[43 : 33] Very clearly. To a great day of judgment. In the future. He is equally clear. That the verdict. Of that. Final day of judgment. Is being decided.

Now. Today. In people's response. To his gospel. Gospel proclamation. Brings the eternal realities. Of salvation. And of judgment.

Right. Into the present. The verdict. Of that day. Is being delivered. Now. For this generation. Jesus says. And that.

Verdict. Is either. Justification. Now. By faith. Through obedience. And submission. To Christ. As the king. Or.

It is condemnation. Now. By unbelief. By refusal. To submit. To his rule. And friends.

[44 : 28] In just the same way. So it is. For us. Every one of us. In our generation. Today. The last day. Will declare.

To all the world. To earth. And to heaven. A verdict. That is being. Forged. Today. Now. By your response.

To Jesus Christ. The king. So he. Who has ears. Let him hear. Judgment. Begins. Today. And your. Response.

Today. Will. Shape. Eternity. And secondly. Not only. Has judgment. Begun.

But it is. Jesus Christ. And none. Other. Who is. The judge. Of all. Verse 28. Is very. Emphatic. Come. To me.

[45 : 24] Says Jesus. He. And he. Alone. Is. The giver. Of eternal. Life. And rest. Jesus. Could not. Be more. Explicit. Here. In his. Claim. To uniqueness. As the.

Final. Surpassing. Revelation. Of the one. True God. Verse 25. The father. Is the lord. Of heaven. And earth. And yet. Jesus says.

In verse 27. All things. Have been handed. By the father. To me. Jesus. Is. The sovereign. Ruler. Of all. There is no.

Rule in the universe. Outside. Of Jesus Christ. And second. The father. Verse 25. Is sovereign. In revelation.

He hides. He reveals. To whom he will. And yet. Verse 27. It is given to. Jesus. Alone. To choose. To whom.

[46 : 18] He reveals. The father. There is no. Revelation. Of God. Outside. Of Jesus Christ. And thirdly. There is no. Relationship. With God. Outside.

Of Jesus Christ. Verse 27. Only the son. Truly knows. The father. In real intimacy. And those. The son. Chooses. To reveal him to.

So that they also. May know him. Do you see. Jesus Christ. Is utterly. Is utterly. Unique. He alone. Is lord of all. He's the ruler of all.

He alone. Is the great revealer. Of God. And he alone. Can lead any. Into real. Relationship. With God. To Jesus.

And to Jesus alone. Belong all. Issues. Of salvation. And. Of judgment. It's Jesus alone.

[47 : 15] Who can give rest. Forever. There's no salvation. In this world. Or in eternity. Without. Jesus Christ. And so friends.

That means that the message. Here of verse 28. Is absolutely. Vital. Just as it is. Absolutely wonderful. For everyone. Listening today. Whether you're perplexed. Perplexed. Whether you're. Penitent. Or even. If you are still. In your heart. Hardened. And perverse. Come. To me. Says Jesus. And I will.

Give you rest. That's a wonderful. Promise. But it's also. A solemn warning. Because. It's not just. An offer. It's a command.

And it requires. A response. Now. In this generation. Because. Judgment. Begins. Today. In the hearing.

[48 : 12] Of the gospel. Of Christ. Jesus Christ. The Lord. Of heaven and earth. He offers you. His rest. His mercy. His forgiveness. His peace. His salvation.

But you must. Grasp it. You must. Cherish it. Why would you. Why would you. Refuse. Him. Whose yoke is easy. Whose burden is light.

Don't refuse him. If you do. If you do. Having heard his voice.

Friends. I have to tell you. It will be. More. Tolerable. On the day of judgment. For the city of Sodom. Than for you. He who has ears to hear.

Let him hear. Amen. Let's pray together. Almighty God.

[49 : 18] Give us grace. That we may. May cast away. The works of darkness. And put on us. The armor of light. Now. In this time. Of this mortal life.

In which thy son. Jesus Christ. Came to visit us. In great humility. That in the last day. When he shall. Come again.

In his glorious majesty. To judge. Both the quick. And the dead. We may rise. To the life immortal. Through him.

Who lives. And reigns. With thee. And the Holy Spirit. One God. Now and forever. Amen.