

## St. Matthew

### Chapter 11:20-30

Chapter 11 concludes with Jesus cursing the unrepentant cities and a short and compact teaching about the Trinity and God's revelation to His church.

#### Woes (11:20-24)

Just as Jesus had commanded the disciples to shake the dust off their feet if the cities they went to did not receive them, so Jesus pronounces woes to the cities who did not repent when He did His miracles in their midst.



*Lot and His Family Flee Sodom and Gemorrah*

There are two chastisements, first for Chorazin and Bethsaida, two small cities on the shore of Galilee, very near Capernaum. Jesus did signs and wonders in their eyes, but they did not repent. Their shame is double, says Jesus, for if such work were done in Tyre and Sidon, two pagan sea ports north of Israel on the Mediterranean Sea, they would have repented.

The worst denunciation falls on Capernaum, the city Jesus used as a sort of base of operations. The Lord was continually coming and going from Capernaum, and yet they did not repent. Jesus says that even Sodom would have repented if they had seen His marvelous works. And so, warns Jesus, Capernaum's judgment will be more severe than Sodom's.

We here take note of a couple of things. First, Jesus is not nice, He comes preaching wrath and judgment. Second, we see that the law is always toward repentance, and judgment is sure for the unrepentant.

#### Jesus Invites the Weary to Him (11:25-30)

The last verses of the chapter include Jesus' prayer, His teaching of the giving between the Father and the Son, and then ends with the invitation for the weary and heavy laden to take us Jesus' light and easy yoke.



*The Ruins of Capernaum*

*Jesus prays to the Father.*

<sup>25</sup> **At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. <sup>26</sup> Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.**

The wise and prudent of the world (ie the cities who have been condemned, the unbelieving synagogues, etc.) cannot see that Jesus' witness is true. Babies, on the other hand, are given eyes to see and ears to hear the truth of Jesus.

The truths of the Scripture are not immediately accessible to the mind of the flesh, for the things the Lord says are for believing, not understanding. “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” [1 Corinthians 2:14] Again: “For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.” [1 Corinthians 1:26,27]

Spiritual discernment is a gift from God, all saving knowledge is revealed (not found, discovered, etc.), and He gives it by His grace, and it is to His praise, as Jesus prayed, “I thank You, Father...” We, too, thank our Father that He has revealed His truth to us.

*Jesus speaks of the gifts that the Father Has given Him.*

<sup>27</sup> **All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.**

Matthew is here writing of the profound things of the Holy Trinity, things which St John delighted to write. That all things are delivered to Jesus by the Father indicates that Jesus is both God and man, for according to His divine nature He already possesses all things, and yet according to His human nature all things are delivered to Him. And yet, to receive them He must be God.

This communication of divine attributes to the human nature of Christ we call the “Communication of Attributes,” and specifically the *genus maiestaticum*, the majestic genus. Here is how our Confessions put forth this teaching:

**50]** But as regards the assumed human nature in the person of Christ, some have indeed wished to contend that even in the personal union with divinity it has nothing else and nothing more than only its natural, essential properties according to which it is in all things like its brethren; and that, on this account, nothing should or could be ascribed to the human nature in Christ which is beyond, or contrary to, its natural properties, even though the testimony of Scripture is to that effect. **51]** But that this opinion is false and incorrect is so clear from God’s Word that even their own associates rebuke and reject this error. For the Holy Scriptures, and the ancient Fathers from the Scriptures [in which they were fully trained], testify forcefully that, for the reason and because of the fact that it has been personally united with the divine nature in Christ, the human nature in Christ, when it was glorified and exalted to the right hand of the majesty and power of God, after the form of a servant and humiliation had been laid aside, did receive, apart from, and over and above its natural, essential, permanent properties, also special, high, great, supernatural, inscrutable, ineffable, heavenly *prerogativas* (prerogatives) and excellences in majesty, glory, power, and might above everything that can be named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come [Eph. 1, 21]; and that, accordingly, in the operations of the office of Christ: the human nature in Christ, in its measure and mode, is equally employed [at the same time], and has also its *efficaciam*, that is, power and, efficacy, not only from, and according to, its natural, essential attributes, or only so far as their ability extends, but chiefly from, and according to, the majesty, glory, power, and might which it has received through the personal union, glorification, and exaltation. **52]** And nowadays

even the adversaries can or dare scarcely deny this, except that they dispute and contend that those are only created gifts or *finitae qualitates* (finite qualities), as in the saints, with which the human nature in Christ is endowed and adorned; and that, according to their [crafty] thoughts or from their own [silly] *argumentationes* (argumentations) or [fictitious] proofs, they wish to measure and calculate of what the human nature in Christ could or should be capable or incapable without becoming annihilated.

**53]** But the best, most certain, and surest way in this controversy is this, namely, that what Christ has received according to His assumed human nature through the personal union, glorification, or exaltation, and of what His assumed human nature is capable beyond the natural properties, without becoming annihilated, no one can know better or more thoroughly than the Lord Christ Himself; and He has revealed it in His Word, as much as is needful for us to know of it in this life. Now, everything for which we have in this instance clear, certain testimonies in the Scriptures, we must simply believe, and in no way argue against it, as though the human nature in Christ could not be capable of the same.

**54]** Now it is indeed correct and true what has been said concerning the created gifts which have been given and imparted to the human nature in Christ, that it possesses them in or of itself. But these do not reach unto the majesty which the Scriptures, and the ancient Fathers from Scripture, ascribe to the assumed human nature in Christ.

**55]** For to quicken, to have all judgment and all power in heaven and on earth, to have all things in His hands, to have all things in subjection beneath His feet, to cleanse from sin, etc., are not created gifts, but divine, infinite properties; and yet, according to the declaration of Scripture, these have been given and communicated to the man Christ, John 5, 27; 6, 39; Matt. 28, 18; Dan. 7, 14; John 3, 35; 13, 3; Matt. 11, 27; Eph. 1, 22; Heb. 2, 8; 1 Cor. 15, 27; John 1, 3.

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And Jesus is talking about more than Himself and the Father, He also says that He is the only means to know the Father. [see John 1:18; 14:6]

These exclusive claims of Jesus might sound harsh to our ears, more like law than Gospel. But that we would not think that Jesus came with the chief purpose of judging the earth, He comforts us with His mercy and compassion, inviting to Himself (to He who is gentle and lowly in heart) the weak and heavy laden. That Jesus is *the* way to know the Father is good news, sweetest Gospel.

*Jesus calls Sinners to Himself.*

<sup>28</sup> **Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.** <sup>29</sup> **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.** <sup>30</sup> **For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."**



*A Yoke of Oxen*

A yoke, just by virtue of being a yoke, is heavy and burdensome. Such was Jesus' cross the yoke of man's sin and the burden of God's wrath. That was our yoke, what we should have borne, and yet Jesus takes it from us and bears alone the weight of sin, death and despair. He takes our yoke and gives us His, the light yoke of freedom and joy and forgiveness and life. "Christ's burden does not oppress but makes light and itself bears rather than is borne." [Luther]

We are born harnessed to the yoke of the law and its punishments, to sin, to slavery, to death (the "yoke of bondage," [Galatians 5:1]). But Jesus has set us free in the giving of the yoke of the Gospel, in the blessedness of the forgiveness of our sins.