



Are you the one? Rejoicing in Jesus in the face of opposition

7 studies on Matthew 11-13

Contents

bathurst
presbyterian
church

ALL
FOR
JESUS

Introduction

1. Doubting John

Matthew 11:1-19

2. The gentle revealer

Matthew 11:20-30

3. The Lord of rest

Matthew 12:1-14

4. Behold my servant

Matthew 12:15-21

5. More than words

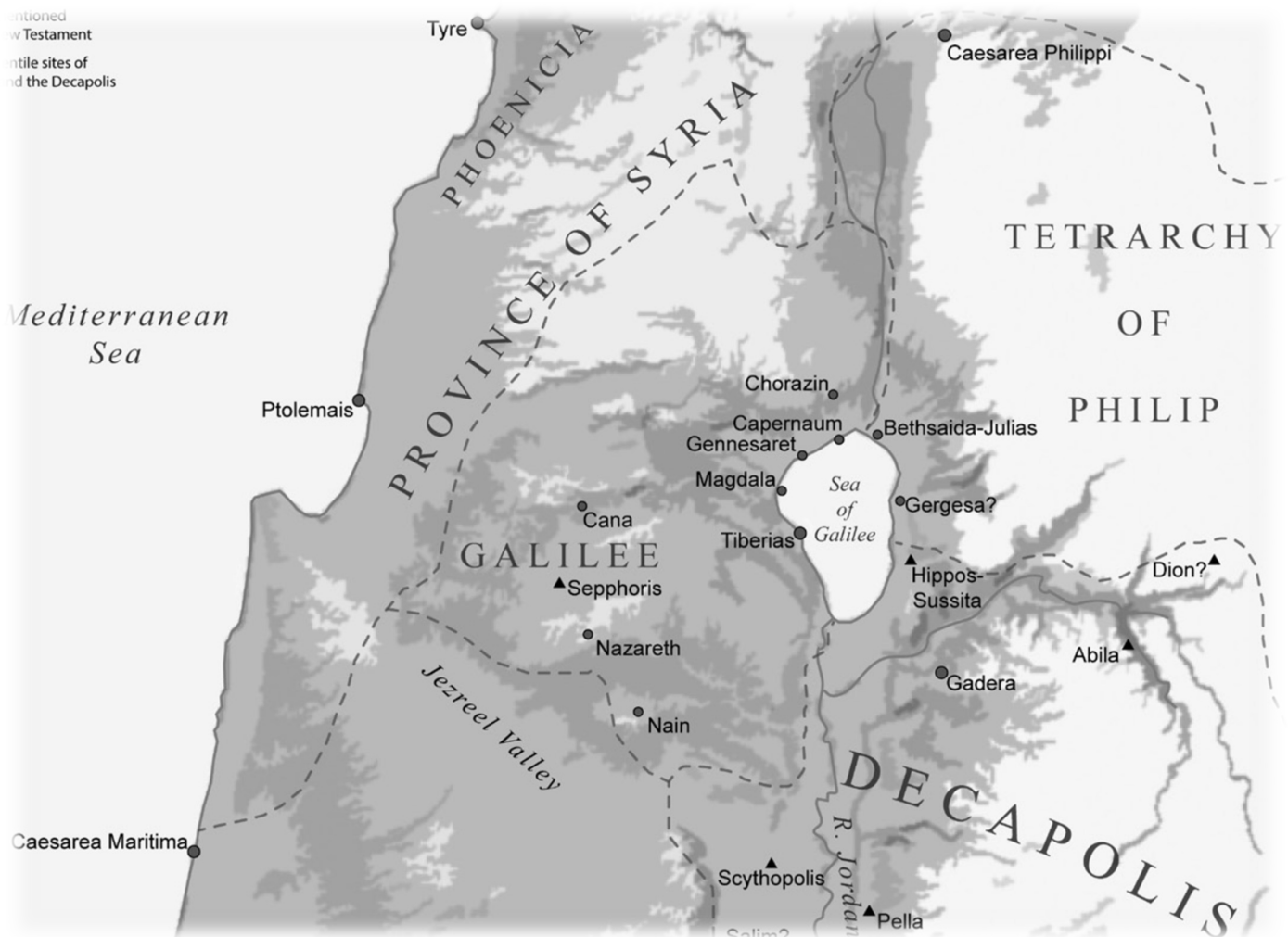
Matthew 12:22-37

6. Stick with the family

Matthew 12:38-50

7. Not all... but heaps

Matthew 13:1-52



As we finished Chronicles, we left God's people back in Jerusalem, still yearning for a saviour—a perfect King to come. Matthew wants his readers to see Jesus *is the one* who was to come. He's the fulfilment of the promises God made to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) and King David (2 Samuel 7). He's the forever King to reverse the curse brought about by human sin. He's the Son of God, but he's also the perfect human who restores humanity to God. Notice how, stroke by stroke, Matthew paints a picture of Jesus:

Chapter 1: Jesus' genealogy tells us he's a descendant of Abraham and David

Chapter 2: The wise men see, and king Herod fears, that Jesus is the King

Chapter 3: John the Baptist prepares the way for the Lord

Chapter 4: Jesus resists temptation and declares that with him, the kingdom of heaven has come near

Chapter 5-7: From the mount, Jesus says he is the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets

Chapter 8-9: Jesus performs miracles that systematically fulfill the prophecies about the promised Messiah

Chapter 10: Jesus gives authority to the 'new' 12 (apostles, not tribes) to proclaim the kingdom of heaven

At the end of 10 chapters, can we see the picture Matthew is painting? Jesus is the Christ! He is the King of the kingdom of heaven! The people who first read Chronicles longed for this King to come. And here he is, Jesus, acting with God's power and authority, fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies like a square peg in a square hole.

So why not stop at chapter 10?

Why not let the apostles advance the Kingdom from chapter 10 onward and watch it wash through the world like dye through water?

The answer is... human sin— that is opposition to God's rule. More to the point, opposition to God's King. We've seen it growing since the days of King Herod in Matthew (but really... sin has been festering away since Genesis 3!). Matthew's been painting a very clear picture of who Jesus is, but not everyone sees it. Not everyone believes he is the one. Some doubt—some are completely opposed to the idea. Therefore, we can't stop at chapter 10, we have to see how this plays out. How will Jesus and his claim to be the King establishing the kingdom of heaven stand in the face of doubt, disbelief and defiance? Will he really be shown to be the one who is to come?

We don't get the full picture in this section. But we do get some pretty strong hints. For those of us willing to believe Jesus is the one, he promises greatness (11:11), rest for our souls (11:29), restoration (12:13), justice (12:20), forgiveness (12:31), a place in his family (12:50) and a place in the Father's kingdom (13:43). All we need to do is believe!

To be clear, we'll see in this section that many don't believe. But if we do—ours is the Kingdom.

My prayer for us as we move through this section of Matthew is that we would see more and more clearly that Jesus is the one who was to come. He is God's King. And as we see who he is, my prayer is we would also see that the best life we can live today is one of full commitment to living for him.

1 Doubting John

Matthew 11:1-19

Getting started

Think of a time you were tricked into believing something that wasn't true and share with the group.

Read Matthew 11:1-6

1. We're told Jesus is in Galilee in v 1 (see the map on the contents page—it's north Israel). Look back at Matthew 2:19-23 for the reasons Jesus is in Galilee.

2. In v 3 John (the Baptist) prompts his disciples to ask Jesus if he's 'the one who is to come'. Look back at Matthew 3:11-12 and explain what John was expecting from 'the one who is to come'.

3. We've seen Jesus do some pretty incredible things in Matthew 8 and 9. Despite this, John is doubting if Jesus is 'the one who is to come' or if he should be expecting someone else. Why would John be doubting?

4. How does Jesus respond to John's disciples and John's doubt?

5. Read Isaiah 35:1-6 and 61:1. What is Jesus telling John and his listeners in verse 6?

6. Have you ever had doubts about Jesus? Share them with the group. How does Jesus' interaction with John model a healthy way to deal with our doubts?

Read Matthew 11:7-15

7. In verse 10, Jesus quotes Malachi 3:1. Go back and read this verse. What does it tell us Jesus means when he says in v 11 that John is the greatest among those born of women?

8. Think about John's position/role in history and his present circumstances. Why do you think Jesus says 'the least in the kingdom of heaven' is greater than him?

9. My preference for translating v 12 is the NIV footnote, "The kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and violent people have been raiding it".

i) How have we seen the kingdom forcefully advancing in Matthew (see 3:16, 8:3, 8:16, 9:2, 9:32-33)?

ii) How have violent people been raiding it (see 11:2 and 14:3-4)?

10. The language of this passage implies a serious conflict as the kingdom of heaven advances in the world. How do we see that conflict played out in our world/your life today?

Read Matthew 11:16-19

11. Why was this 'generation' cynical of John? Why were they cynical of Jesus?

12. Despite the cynicism of the crowds, Jesus and John were eventually 'proved right' (v 19) through Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus' deeds should end our cynicism. But, as opposition against Jesus continues to this very day, it is easy to listen to this voice, and for our cynicism to turn to unbelief. How can we ensure that we don't let the voice of the opposition win us over? How like John, can we seek assurance from God in the face of our doubts? Give some practical examples of how Christians can work on their doubts (Philippians 2:12 and 2 Peter 1:10 implore us to make our calling and election sure—we need to deal with our doubts!).

Pray

2 The gentle revealer

Matthew 11:20-30

Getting started

When/where do you remember first hearing about Jesus?

Read Matthew 11:20-24

1. Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum were in Galilee (see the map on contents page). Tyre and Sidon were in Phoenicia and were regularly denounced by Old Testament prophets for idolatry. Consistently in the Bible Sodom is known for wickedness. What advantage does Jesus say Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum have over Tyre, Sidon and Sodom?

2. What will be the result for Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum on judgment day because of the squandering of their privileged position?

3. Those who have grown up in Australia (the same could be said for other countries) have had religion in our schools and significant Christian influence in society. Of what eternal value will that be for us?

Read Matthew 11:25-27

4. Jesus is attributing the acceptance or rejection of his message to the hiding and revealing of his message by his Father. This is quite confronting. It means it is not our cleverness that leads us to understand the message of salvation. It is God alone who reveals it to us. BUT at the same time, Jesus clearly holds 'this generation' (v 16) and these cities (v 20 to 24) accountable for not hearing and repenting. Here we see the Bible's twin claims on how salvation works:

1. God is sovereign/in control of who is and isn't saved;
2. Humans are entirely accountable for whether or not they receive the message and turn to God.

We need to hold each of these claims firmly. When we talk about God 'choosing some and not others' we must also talk about the clear responsibility the Bible says we have to respond to the gospel. It is a common error to hold only one of these claims. What might be some practical implications for how we do church and how we live as Christians if we say:

i) Only God has a role to play in salvation?

ii) Only humans have a role to play in salvation?

5. Explain in your own words the difference between 'the wise and learned' and 'little children'.
6. Why do you think the message is hidden from the 'wise and learned' and revealed to 'little children'?
7. The Father is in charge of concealing and revealing. According to v 27 what has he revealed to Jesus?
8. Who apart from the Father has the authority to reveal or conceal?
9. Last week we saw that there's always been opposition to Jesus. How could these words of Jesus give us confidence to keep living for him even if our family or friends tell us it's a waste of time?

Read Matthew 11:28-30

10. Jesus just made the claim that he has the authority to reveal the knowledge of God to whom he chooses. Who does he invite to come to him here?
11. Despite his divine authority, what does Jesus tell the weary and burdened he is like?
12. In 23:4 Jesus charges the Pharisees/religious rulers with putting a heavy load on people's shoulders. This is likely a reference to their traditions and regulations. What can people expect by comparison if they yoke themselves to Jesus?
13. Have you accepted the invitation of the gentle revealer to find rest in him? How can you remind yourself of what Jesus is like and grow in your sense of rest in him this week?
14. Who do you know that is weary and burdened? How can you help them to hear the invitation of Jesus to find rest in him?

Pray

3 The Lord of rest

Matthew 12:1-14

Getting Started

What's a rule you have at home that other people may find silly?

Read Matthew 12:1-2

1. So far since chapter 11 we've seen John' doubt Jesus, Jesus condemn unrepentant towns, and Jesus claim that the truth about him is hidden from the wise and learned. There's a sense of growing opposition. How does that show up here?

Read Matthew 12:3-8

2. In v 3-4 Jesus cites the example of God's chosen King David being on the run from his opponents and famished (see 1 Samuel 21:1-9). Why do you think he uses this example to respond to the Pharisees' accusation?

3. King David and the priests on Sabbath duty would have had a special place in the Pharisees' minds. One was God's chosen King and the other God's mediators. What is Jesus trying to reveal about himself?

4. Read Hosea 6:6. This is a prophecy against Israel. From this verse, how would you explain the problem with Israel? How does it help us to understand the problem with the Pharisees in this conversation with Jesus?

5. When the Pharisees condemned Jesus' disciples for picking grain on the Sabbath, he said in verse 7 that they were condemning the innocent. Why does Jesus say his disciples are innocent?

6. The Sabbath was meant to be a day of 'rest' for the people of God, but the Pharisees had developed 39 extra rules and regulations around the Sabbath (like not picking grain)! The Sabbath had become a burden for the people. Where else have we learned that they could find rest?

7. 'Justification by faith' is a core doctrine of our church. It means we're made right with God by faith in what Jesus has done for us—not by the things we do for him. But, like the Pharisees, modern Christianity often creates a lot of other 'check boxes' people need to tick for us to see them as 'real' Christians. What are some of the 'check boxes' we expect people to tick?

8. How can we ensure we're not like the Pharisees but instead be super clear that coming to Jesus like a dependent little child is the only way to God?

Read Matthew 12:9-14

9. What does Jesus value that the Pharisees don't?

10. Based on what Jesus has said in 12:1-14, why do you think the Pharisees want to kill Jesus?

11. Since chapter 11, we've seen growing opposition to Jesus. At the same time, we've heard Jesus promise rest for the souls of those who come to him. How will these two things end up working together?

12. Jesus teaches that he came to give rest to the weary and burdened, not rules and traditions. How can we ensure we share this Jesus with the world (and not the rules/tradition version)?

Pray

4 Behold, my servant

Matthew 12:15-21

Getting Started

What are you like when you're involved in an argument?

Read Matthew 12:15-16

1. What was Jesus 'aware of' (look back to 12:14)?

2. John the Baptist was unsure about Jesus' identity because although he thought Jesus was God's King and the coming judge, John still found himself in prison experiencing injustice. Jesus is now aware the pharisees are plotting to kill him. What do you think John would make of Jesus' response here?

3. It seems from v 15 that Jesus had the numbers to lead a revolution and overthrow those plotting to kill him. Why didn't he do this? (Matthew 26:50-56 may help with your answer)

4. Jesus warns those he heals not to tell anyone. Yet, at the end of Matthew (28:18-20) he commands his disciples to tell everyone! Why is Jesus wanting things to be secret here?

5. What can Christians learn about the way Jesus responds to opposition in this section?

Read Matthew 12:17-21

6. It may look like Jesus has been intimidated by his opposition and is now on the run, but what reason does verse 17 give to help us see this differently?

7. This quote from Isaiah 42:1-4 was alluded to in Matthew 3:17 at Jesus' baptism. There's a difference in the title given to Jesus here. What did God call him at his baptism? What does he call him here? Why do you think, at this point in Matthew, we're being told this about Jesus?

8. How will the servant bring/proclaim justice to the nations (perhaps check Isaiah 53—particularly v 11-12 for help with this)?

9. Considering v 18-21, how would you sum up Jesus' character in your own words?

10. How do we see Jesus bring justice through to victory in Matthew's gospel? How does this help us understand why Jesus wanted to keep his healings a secret in v 16?

11. Consider Jesus' servant hearted and humble character. As a follower of Jesus, share with the group how you're going reflecting this.

12. Jesus was able to humble himself completely because of his deep trust in the goodness of the Father. Do you think that our lack of trust in God's goodness is what stops us from being humble servants in this life? Discuss your answer.

13. What do we learn in this passage about how we should face those who oppose us in this life?

Pray

5 More than words

Matthew 12:22-37

Getting Started

What do people in the world think about Jesus today?

Read Matthew 12:22-24

1. How do people's opinions of Jesus differ here? Any ideas why?

Read Matthew 12:25-29

2. According to Jesus, why does the Pharisees' accusation make no sense?

3. Rather than a servant of Satan doing Satan's work, what does Jesus say is happening as he drives out demons?

4. We learnt in Matthew 11:12 that since the days of John the Baptist, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing. How do we see that happening here?

5. Who is the primary opponent Jesus is engaging with here?

Read Matthew 12:30-37

6. What does Jesus say here to those who are sitting on the fence in their opinion of him?

7. What does Jesus mean when he talks about 'gather' and 'scatter' in verse 30? Which would you say you're doing?

8. Blasphemy is extreme slander, or speaking against. What will be forgiven? What won't be forgiven?
9. How are the Pharisees blaspheming against the Spirit in this passage? Can they ever be forgiven?
10. Jesus knows the hearts of the Pharisees because of what comes out of their mouth. What are the evil/empty words the Pharisees have been using?
11. Jesus says in verse 37, 'for by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned'. How can the Pharisees—or anyone for that matter—be acquitted or condemned (see Romans 10:9-10 for help)?
12. Words that oppose Jesus have consequences, as do words that endorse him. What do your words reveal about your heart and your future on the day of judgment?

Pray

6 Stick with the family

Matthew 12:38-50

Getting Started

What are some common attributes people might use to identify a person with their family members?

Read Matthew 12:38-42

1. Do you think Jesus performing a sign on request for the religious rulers would really change their opinion of him? Why/why not?
2. The authenticity of Jonah's preaching was attested to by the miracle of him entering and exiting the belly of the fish (in Jewish tradition three days and three nights can mean 'three days' or it can mean a combination of any part of three separate days). What does Jesus say will attest to the authenticity of *his* preaching? What is he talking about? (see Matthew 28:1-7)
3. What will be the consequence of this generation's rejection of Jesus?
4. In what sense is Jesus greater than Solomon and Jonah and more worthy of being listened to?
5. If Jesus turned up and performed a sign on demand for people today, do you think they would turn to him and change their lives? Why/why not?
6. How can we help people to see Jesus is really worth listening to?

Read Matthew 12:43-45

7. Jesus says even if a person is cleansed of impure spirits they are not safe from being re-occupied. What do people need to occupy their hearts with in order not to be on the side of Satan?

8. Think of all the alternative world views people have (from atheists, to agnostics, humanists, muslims, etc). What implications does this passage have for anyone who has not filled their heart with Jesus (i.e. put their faith in him)?

9. Since v 30 Jesus has been very clear that there is no middle ground. You are either for him or against him. How should this passage shape our view of those who don't follow Jesus? How should it shape what we want for them? How we speak to them? What we pray for them?

Read Matthew 12:46-50

10. It seems like Jesus is disowning his family here! But that's not happening. Instead, he's trying to help his listeners see how they can belong to his 'kingdom' family. What is the essential qualifier for belonging to Jesus' kingdom family (see also John 6:29)?

11. In the face of strong opposition how can we remind each other of the goodness and importance of holding on to our faith in Jesus?

Pray

7 Not all... but heaps

Matthew 13:1-52

Getting Started

Have you ever planted something that ended up growing better than you'd ever hoped? Share.

Read Matthew 13:1-9

1. What is the context of these parables (use both v 1-2 and what we've seen so far in chapters 11-12 to shape your answer)?

2. Each of the four scenarios in this passage have the same seed and the same farmer. What's different in each scenario?

Read Matthew 13:10-17

3. Who came to Jesus to ask the meaning of the parables? Who didn't? Who did Jesus give the meaning to? What does this tell us about the key to understanding the parables?

4. Large crowds gathered to Jesus, but only his disciples came to him for the truth. What does this section tell us about the rest of the crowds? How does this compare with the crowds in Matthew 27:20-22?

Read Matthew 13:18-23

5. Here Jesus is giving his disciples 'the secrets of the kingdom of heaven' (v 11). What secret does he reveal to them here?

6. At first glance it could seem like only 1 in 4 people who hear about Jesus believe in him. But, what does the fruitfulness of the 'good soil' tell us about the future size of the kingdom of heaven?

Read Matthew 13:24-43

7. What 'secret of the kingdom of heaven' does Jesus reveal to his disciples in the parable of the weeds?
8. What 'secret of the kingdom' of heaven is Jesus revealing in the parables of the mustard seed and the yeast?

Read Matthew 13:44-46

9. What is something as small as a pearl worth to the man who found it in this parable? What 'secret of the kingdom of heaven' is Jesus revealing here?

Read Matthew 13:47-52

10. What 'secret of the kingdom of heaven' does Jesus teach in the parable of the net? Is this similar to another parable we've looked at in this chapter?
11. In the last section of this passage Jesus talks about the teachers of the law (the law = our Old Testament). What will they understand about Jesus if they understand the law correctly?
12. Throughout Matthew 11-13 we've seen mounting opposition to Jesus, including a plot to kill him. It could seem like the bad guys will win, or Jesus' 'good news of the kingdom of heaven' will come to nothing. How do these parables help Jesus' disciples in the context of this opposition?
13. At what point in Matthew's gospel (and in history generally) did the kingdom of heaven seem most overwhelmed by opposition; most insignificant and of least worth? What has happened since then?
14. It's not just the disciples in Jesus' day that faced strong opposition. Christianity today can seem overwhelmed by the world too. How do these parables offer comfort to us and spur us on?

Pray