



Week Nine

Responses to the King

Matthew 11 & 12

Read and Summarize

Read chapters 11 and 12. Provide a brief summary in one to two sentences for each chapter, using your own words to capture the main events.

Matthew 11

Matthew 12

Clarifying the Context

1. The prophet Malachi foretold of an “Elijah” (the great Old Testament prophet to Israel under the reign of the terrible King Ahab and his pagan wife Jezebel), who would prepare the way of Messiah. Read Malachi 3:1-7 and 4:4-6.
 - a. What did Malachi say would be the reason for Elijah’s return?
 - b. What is the “great and awesome day of the Lord”? (Malachi 4:5)

- c.** In our passage for this week, who does Jesus reveal to be the Elijah of whom Malachi spoke? (Matthew 11:10-11)

Digging into the Details

Matthew 11

- 2.** Up until this point in Matthew's gospel, resistance to Jesus' message has appeared only occasionally. In chapters 11 and 12, resistance and hostility to Jesus crescendos. The chapter opens with John the Baptist sending word to Jesus and His disciples, asking if Jesus is the promised Messiah.
 - a.** Why do you think John the Baptist, who was previously heralding Jesus as the Messiah, is now experiencing doubts? (verse 2)
 - b.** How does Jesus' response provide comfort to John? (See Isaiah 29:18, 35:5-6, 53:4, 29:18-19, 61:1)
 - c.** Have you ever felt similar to John, doubting Jesus as a result of your circumstances? Write about it below.

- 3.** In verses 7-19, Jesus begins to speak to the crowds concerning John.
- a.** Look up verse 12 in multiple translations. What do you think it means when Jesus says the Kingdom of Heaven has “suffered violence, and the violent take it by force”?
 - b.** How do you see the Kingdom of God pushing back against darkness today?
 - c.** In what ways did the people of that generation act like fickle children toward both Jesus and John the Baptist? (verses 16-17)
 - d.** What do you think it means that “wisdom is justified by her deeds (children)”? (verse 19)

4. In verses 20-24, Jesus offers critiques of nearby towns. Summarize these critiques in your own words.

5. Right on the heels of these strong critiques, to whom does Jesus insist that the Father reveals the truth about Himself? (verse 25) What does this mean?

6. In verses 28-30, Jesus invites followers to come to Him and find rest for their souls, an easy yoke and a light burden. A yoke is a wooden beam used between a pair of oxen to pull loads. In the Old Testament, it was used metaphorically to represent oppression, slavery, or heavy burdens. (See 1 Kings 12:11) But in verses 28-30, Jesus invites followers to take His yoke upon them, saying His “yoke is easy and His burden is light.”
 - a. What do you think He means by this?

 - b. How would this have contrasted with the message of the religious leaders of their day?

 - c. How has being yoked with Jesus brought peace in your life or rest for your weary soul?

Matthew 12

- 7.** In chapter 12, we see the difference between Jesus and the religious leaders played out, as Jesus and His disciples are walking through the grain fields on the Sabbath.
- a.** In verse 1, what do Jesus and the disciples do, and why do they do it?
 - b.** Why did the Pharisees view picking grain and healing on the Sabbath as “lawbreaking”? (See Exodus 20:10, Deuteronomy 5:14 & 23:25)
 - c.** How does Jesus correct their misunderstanding of the law? (See 1 Samuel 21:1-6)
 - d.** Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 (“I desire mercy, not sacrifice”) in His rebuke of the Pharisees. The prophet Hosea said this after Israel had become unfaithful to God, breaking the covenant despite continuing superficial religious routines. The Hebrew word “hesed” (translated “mercy”) implies not just forgiveness, but also steadfast love, covenant loyalty, and kindness. Why is mercy more important to God than ritual sacrifice?

- e.** Do you ever feel like you are checking the boxes of living a faithful Christian life? List some examples. Pray that the Lord will give you a fresh hesed love for Him, His Word, and the people around you.

8. In verses 9-14, we find Jesus being confronted again by the Pharisees regarding the Sabbath.

- a.** What question do they ask Him in verse 10, and why do they ask it?
- b.** How does Jesus' illustration of a sheep that falls in a pit on the Sabbath correct their understanding of the Sabbath?
- c.** What does He do to emphasize this truth?
- d.** How do the Pharisees respond in verse 14, and how does Jesus respond in verses 15-16?

9. In verse 22, Jesus heals a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute.

a. What was the response of the crowds to this miracle? (verse 23)

b. By contrast, what is the response of the Pharisees? (verse 24)

c. In your own words, summarize Jesus' response to the Pharisees' accusations in verses 25-29.

10. In verses 30-32, Jesus speaks hard words.

a. What is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?

b. Why is this the unforgivable sin?

11. In verses 33-37, Jesus speaks revealing and sobering words.

- a.** What point is Jesus trying to make?

- b.** What does He mean when He says, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"? (verse 33)

- c.** How does all of this make sense in light of the recent confrontations with the Pharisees?

- d.** How do your words reflect your internal spiritual state?

12. In verses 46-50, who does Jesus identify as His true family?

- a.** What does this tell us about the nature of spiritual relationships?

b. How does this encourage you to invest in the family of God?

13. In these two chapters, the overarching theme is the inward condition of the heart versus the outward appearance. Jesus denounced the legalism of the Pharisees, teaching instead the true intent of God's law. What are some practical ways that you can avoid legalism and instead prioritize compassion and mercy in your daily life?

Attribute of God & Application

- What did this week's study reveal to you about King Jesus and His Kingdom?
- How do these chapters encourage or challenge you in your life currently?

**Spend some time praising God for who He is and for what He has done.
Ask Him to help you as you seek to live in light of His Word this week.**

