

# Come to Me, All Who are Weary and Burdened, and I Will Give You Rest

## Matthew 11: 20-30

**DIG:** What judgment does Yeshua pass on each town mentioned? Why will **their judgment** be worse than that of **Tyre and Sidon**? If the revelation of Christ and His miracles is rejected, what is the **judgment**? Why is the Gospel **hidden from the wise and learned**? Who truly knows **God**? What does Jesus mean by **taking up His yoke**? What does our Savior mean when He says: **My yoke is easy and My burden is light**?

**REFLECT:** In those times when you might feel stressed or frustrated, the call still goes out for us to come to Yeshua for His perspective and true shalom in our hearts. Are you walking in His plan today? Are you worn out from ongoing problems? Are you weighted down with worry and stress? Is Jesus' **yoke** resting lightly on your shoulders or are you struggling to get out of it? Why? How does **taking up His way** lead to **rest**?

In view of the growing resistance of pharisaic Judaism, and subsequent rejection of His message, **Messiah** pronounced woe upon the cities that His miracles had been performed. Our **Lord's** words indicate that the hearts of the Jewish people were harder than the hearts of the **Gentiles**, for if the miracles had been performed in **Gentile territory**, they would have believed in His message and turned to Him in faith. While we have records of miracles at both **Bethsaida and Capernaum**, there were two places named **Bethsaida**. One east of the Jordan, Bethsaida Julias (**Luke 9:10; Mark 8:22**); the other on the western shore of the Lake of Galilee, the birthplace of Andrew and **Peter**. The latter is in view here. **Bethsaida** means *house of fishes*, indicating its main trade.

**Capernaum** was a large city that lay to the north of **Bethsaida** and was the home base for Jesus' ministry in Galilee. **Capernaum** was where **Matthew** sat at the tax collector's booth (**Matthew 9:9**). To the south was Magdala, the city of dyers, the home of **Mary Magdalene** (**Mark 15:40; Luke 8:2; John 20:1**). **The Talmud mentions its shops and its woolworks, speaks of its great wealth, but also of the corruption of its inhabitants.**

We do not have the record of a single miracle our **Lord** performed at **Chorazin**. Nor do we have any record of **Jesus** even being in **Chorazin**. But it was in the sphere of Jerusalem and should have been influenced by His message. It was celebrated for its grain, and if it had been closer to Yerushalayim would have been the source of grain for the Temple.<sup>629</sup> Consequently, because the people of **Chorazin and Bethsaida** had the light of both **Messiah's** words and works, they were subject to greater judgment than the **Gentiles** who had not had that testimony.

Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of His miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. Christ's treatment of these towns seems less justified than His comparatively mild rebuke of those who openly criticized Him. For the most part, **Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida**, towns that typified places where His miracles were performed, did not take any direct action against the maverick Rabbi, they merely ignored Him. They just carried on with their busy lives. Indifference, knowingly or unknowingly, is a subtle form of unbelief. It so completely ignores **ADONAI** that **He** is not even an issue worth arguing about. **He** is not to be taken seriously enough to criticize.<sup>630</sup>

**Woe to you, Chorazin. Woe to you, Bethsaida.** Then comes perhaps the most convincing statement - that **if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in the Gentile areas of Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Mt 11:20-21).** The wickedness of **Tyre and Sidon** and the predictions of **judgment** against **them** are detailed in **the TaNaKh** (see my commentary on **Isaiah Er - Wail, You Ships of Tarshish; Your Fortress is Destroyed**). **Sackcloth and ashes** refers to the ancient Near Eastern customs associated with grief and mourning (**Jonah 3:6; Dan 9:3; Es 4:3**). Since **Philip, Andrew and Peter** were from **Bethsaida**, there was ample opportunity to hear and understand the messianic claims of **Yeshua (John 1:44)**.

**But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you (Matthew 11:22).** It is obvious from what **Jesus** says here that **He** had been to **Chorazin** many times since the majority of His **miracles** were done in the other two cities. At the end of his Gospel, **John** said that it was impossible to write down all that **Christ** did. Therefore, the Gospel writers had to be selective in what they wrote. **Chorazin** is an example of material that was omitted under the inspiration of **the Holy Spirit**. **And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Sh'ol (Matthew 11:23a).** Usually brought into English as **Sheol**; the Greek is translated **Hades**, the place of the dead. In **the TaNaKh** **Sh'ol** is a dim vague state where dead souls wait. Most often, English versions use the word **Hell**.

**For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment (Genesis 19:23-25) than for you (Matthew 11:23b-24).** They did not respond even though **they** saw **the miracles**. At this point, the purpose of our **Lords' miracles** was to serve as signs to Israel to authenticate that **He** was indeed **the Messiah**. While all unbelievers will end up in **the lake of fire** (see my commentary on **Revelation Fm - Satan Will Be Released from His Prison and Will Go Out to Deceive the Nations**), there will be degrees of punishment in **hell**.

The principle seems to be, the greater our knowledge, the greater is our responsibility, and the greater will be our punishment if we fail in our responsibility. It may well be that the different stages of punishment in **hell** are not so much a matter of objective circumstances as of subjective awareness of the pain and separation from **ADONAI**. This is parallel to our conception of the varying degrees of reward in heaven (**Daniel 12:3; Luke 19:11-27; First Corinthians 3:14-15; Second Corinthians 5:10**). To some extent, the different degrees of punishment reflect the fact that unrepentant sinners will be given over to the evil desires of their hearts. The misery they will experience from having to live with their own wickedness eternally will be proportionate to the degree of awareness of precisely what they were doing when they chose evil. These are the implications of our final state:

1. The decisions that we make in this life will govern our future condition, not merely for a period of time, but for all eternity (see **Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**). Therefore, we should exercise extraordinary care and diligence as we make them.
2. The conditions of this life, as Rabbi Sha'ul put it, are transitory. They fade into relative insignificance when compared with the eternity to come.
3. The nature of our final state is far more intense than anything known in this life. The images used to depict them are quite inadequate to fully convey what lies ahead. Heaven, for example, will far transcend any joy that we have known here, as the anguish of **hell**.
4. The bliss of heaven ought not to be thought of as simply an intensification of pleasures of this life. The primary dimension of heaven is the presence of the believer with **YHVH**.
5. **Hell** is not only a place of physical suffering, but even more so the awful loneliness of total and final separation from our **Lord**.
6. **Sh'ol** should not be thought of primarily as punishment visited upon unbelievers by a vindictive **God**, but as the natural consequence of the sinful life *chosen* by those who reject **Yeshua ha-Meshiach**.

It appears that although all humans will be consigned either to heaven or hell, there will be degrees of reward for those in heaven, and degrees of punishment for those in hell.<sup>631</sup>

In the middle of these verses that describe rejection and judgment, it is refreshing to hear how **Jesus** prays to **His Father**. Surprisingly, **He** begins with words of thankfulness to **ADONAI of heaven and earth**. This points to the fact that our **Lord** trusted in **the Father's** plan even when things didn't seem to be falling into place as the nation of Isra'el had already rejected **Him** (see **Eh - Jesus is Officially Rejected by the Sanhedrin**). **At that time Jesus said: I praise you, Father, ADONAI of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Ha'Shem** is the sovereign over all, and nothing, not even rejection by the people of Isra'el, will frustrate **His** ultimate plans of messianic redemption. Those who think of themselves as **wise**, they did not see the truth because of their depravity; but because of **the righteous of the TaNaKh** those who had the faith of **little children** saw the light. Because **they** opened hearts to the things of **the LORD they** were able to receive redemption through our **Savior**. **Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do (Mattityahu 11:25-26).**

**Messiah** continues **His** prayer and rejoices in that fact that **all things have been committed to Me by My Father**. There is no doubt whatsoever that in the minds of **His** hearers, that **the Savior** referring to **God** as **My Father** was a claim to **deity**. The Jews had earlier accused **Jesus** of making **Himself equal with God** (John 5:18). When on another occasion when **He** said: **I and the Father are One**, **His Jewish opponents** picked up stones to **stone Him** for blasphemy (John 10:30-31 and John 10:15, 17-18, 25, 29 32-38).

**His** own divine origin is emphasized by **Yeshua Himself** when **He** said: **No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him** (Matthew 11:27). From statements like these, it is clear that we cannot merely accept **Christ** as merely a good rabbi or even a great prophet. **He** claims to have a unique knowledge of the **God** of Israel because **Jesus Himself** was in the presence of **the Father** from all eternity past. Philosophy and religion are utterly incapable of reasoning out **YHVH** or **His** truth because they are finite, lower order. Human ideas and concepts are earthbound and totally useless in producing spiritual fruit or guidance.<sup>632</sup> **ADONAI** must break into the darkness and emptiness of human understanding because before being adopted into **His** family, we are spiritually dead (see **Bw - What God Does for Us at the Moment of Faith**).

Immediately after **His** prayer emphasizing **God's** sovereignty, **Christ** prays for any potential disciples. Here, like two sides of the same coin, we can see both **God's** sovereignty and mankind's free will to respond to **Him** (John 3:16). **This is antimony, where two things are true, but they seem to be opposite (from a human point of view)**. The Trinity is like that, the Scriptures declare that **God is one**, "Sh'ma, Yisra'el: **ADONAI is our God, ADONAI is one**" (Deuteronomy 6:4). But the Bible also teaches us that there are three distinct personalities within the godhead (**Genesis 1:26; Matthew 3:16-17; John 16:13-15; Second Corinthians 13:14**). **He** is ultimately in control, yet we have the responsibility and freedom to respond to **His** call. **Yeshua** says to all mankind: **Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest** (Matthew 11:28). Even in the midst of unbelief and rejection, **Christ** extended a gracious invitation to **His** listeners to trust in **Him**.

It is possible to learn much about **ADONAI's** invitation and never respond to it personally. We can say "no" to **God** and make it stick. Yet **His** invitation is clear and nonnegotiable. **He** gives all and we give **Him** all. It's simple and absolute. **He** is clear in what **He** asks and clear in what **He** offers. Like Adam in the garden of Eden, the choice is up to us.

Isn't it incredible that **the LORD** leaves the choice up to us? Think about it. There are many things in life we can't choose. We can't, for example, choose the weather. We can't control the economy. We can't choose whether or not we are born with a big nose or blue eyes or a lot of hair. We can't even choose how people respond to us.

But we can choose where we spend eternity. The big choice, **God** leaves to us. The critical decision is ours. What are you doing with **His** invitation?<sup>633</sup>

The Torah presents a positive spiritual responsibility as a Jew attempts to fulfill its commandments with love (Tractate Avot 3:6). Most Jews even to this day do not consider the Torah a negative burden but a gift from **YHVH** to be celebrated, as witnessed in the Torah service every Shabbat. After all, it is a great gift to have a roadmap on how to have a blessed life. However, during the time of **Christ** pharisaic Judaism had added **the traditions of men** (Mark 7:8) to the Torah. For every one of the 613 commandments given by Moses, the Oral Law (see **Ei - The Oral Law**) added about 1,500 additional man made laws that the Jews were obligated to obey. Consequently, what was supposed to be a gift to be celebrated (coming under the yoke of the Torah), became a burden to be endured (coming under the yoke of the Oral Law).

In contrast, then, to the burdensome Oral Law, the gracious invitation **He** offers is this: **Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me** (The Hebrew: **Take my yoke upon you is a rabbinic phrase meaning, going to school**), **for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls** (Matthew 11:29). Judaism speaks of "the yoke of Heaven," the commitment any Jew must make to trust in **God**, and "the yoke of the Torah," the simultaneous commitment an observant Jew makes to keep the generalities and details of halakhah. This collective call meant that all Isra'el was responsible for the covenant fidelity of its individual members. A breach by anyone put the entire covenant people in jeopardy, which would trigger dire consequences as Achan found out in Joshua 7.

**Jesus** speaks of **His** own **easy yoke** and **light burden** when **He** said: **For My yoke is easy and My burden is light** (Mattityahu 11:30), because salvation through **Jesus** comes through **faith** alone. These two are sometimes contrasted in a way implying that in comparison with Judaism, **Christ** offers "cheap grace." But this saying of **Yeshua's** must be put alongside remarks such as **Mattityahu 10:38** and **Luke 9:23-24**. The **easy yoke** consists in a total commitment to godliness through the power of **the Holy Spirit**. It simultaneously requires both no effort and maximum effort - no effort in that the necessary moment-to-moment faith can not be worked up from within but is **the gift of God** (**Ephesians 2:8-9**); and maximum effort, in that there is no predetermined level of holiness and obedience sufficient to satisfy **ADONAI** and let us rest on our laurels.<sup>634</sup>

Farmers in ancient Isra'el used to train an inexperienced ox by **yoking** it to an experienced one with a wooden harness. The straps around the older animal were tightly drawn. He carried the load. But the **yoke** around the younger animal was loose. He walked alongside the more mature ox, but his **burden** was **light**. In this verse **Messiah** was saying, "I'll walk alongside you. We are **yoked** together. But **I** pull the weight and carry the **burden**."

I wonder, how many **burdens** is **Jesus** carrying for us that we know nothing about. We're aware of some. **He** carries our sin. **He** carries our shame. **He** carries our eternal debt. But are there others? Has **He** lifted our fears before we felt them? Has **He** carried our confusion so we wouldn't have to? Those times when we have been surprised by our own sense of peace? Could it be that **the Suffering Servant** has lifted our anxiety onto **His** shoulders and placed a **yoke** of kindness on ours?<sup>635</sup>

It is important to understand that no one comes to the full understanding of **the Father** unless **Messiah** gives that spiritual revelation. Even to this day, a person cannot merely agree intellectually to be a believer (**Hebrews 3:7-19**). Anyone who comes to a full knowledge of **the Father** does so only through the mediation of **the Son**, *never* through Mary. **For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Jesus Christ (First Timothy 2:5; also see John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25, 9:15; First John 2:1)**. To believe in **Yeshua as the Promised One** is to receive the completed picture for all the previous covenants to Israel.<sup>636</sup>

**Christ** will never oppress us or give us a burden too heavy to carry. **His yoke** has nothing to do with the demands of works, much less those of human tradition. The believer's obedience to **Messiah** is joyful and happy. For, as **John** explains, **this is the love of God: to keep His commands. And His commands are not burdensome (First John 5:3)**. Submission to **the Savior of Sinners** brings the greatest liberation a person can experience (actually the only true liberation we can experience), because only through **Yeshua ha-Meshiach** are we freed to become what **YHVH** created us to be.

In 1915 Pastor William Barton started to publish a series articles. Using the archaic language of an ancient storyteller, he wrote his parables under the pen name of Safed the Sage. And for the next fifteen years he shared the wisdom of Safed and his enduring spouse Keturah. It was a genre he enjoyed. By the early 1920s, Safed was said to have a following of at least three million. Turning an ordinary event into an illustration of a spiritual truth was always a keynote of Barton's ministry.

There was a day when I was weary. For my days had been full of cares, and my nights had been broken. And I spake unto Keturah, saying,

I would fain Lay me down upon my Couch and rest. Trouble me not for the Space of One Hour. So I laid me down.

And I heard the Patter of Little Feet, and there were Little Hands pushing at my door. And there came unto me the daughter of the daughter of Keturah.

And she said, Grandpa, I want to lie down with you.

And I said, Come, and we will rest together. Close thine eyes Tightly and be Very Still. So shall we rest both of us.

And the way she rested was this. She crept under the Blanket that covered me, so that her head and all the rest of her were Covered, and she said, Grandpa, you have lost your little girl.

Then did I seek my little girl whom I had lost, and I said, Where is my little girl? Where is my little girl? And I felt all over the Blanket, and I found her not. Then she did cry, Here I am. And she threw off the Blanket, and laughed.

And she hid from me the Second Time, and the Third Time, and Many Times beside. And every time I found her again, hiding under the Blanket.

And when this had wearied her, she Sat Astride me, so the One Foot was on the Right Side and one was on the Left, and she held me by the thumbs, and her little hands could not quite reach around my two thumbs. And she rocked back so that her head touched the couch between my knees, and she sat up with a Bump upon my Stomach. And she rode me like a horse to Banbury Cross and to many other places.

And she said, You are having a good time with me, aren't you, Grandpa?  
And I told her that it was true.

Now at the end of One Hour, I came forth leading the little damsel by the hand, and Keturah said, Thou art rested. I behold the weariness is gone.

And it was even so. For the joy of playing with the little damsel had driven away my care, and I was rested.

Now I thought of this, and I remembered that my Lord had said, **Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.** And I remembered that He said that in resting I should bear a **yoke** and find it **easy**, and carry a **burden** and find it **light**. And as I thought about it, I knew what He meant.<sup>637</sup>