

**A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS**  
**O. God's Reactions To The Responses To His Messengers**  
**(Matthew 11:20-30)**

**I. Introduction**

- A. Though John the Baptist was predicted in the Old Testament to be the Messiah's Forerunner and though Jesus was the Messiah and God Incarnate, the responses of Israel to both of these messengers from God was mixed.
- B. God's reaction to these mixed responses to His messengers is reported in Matthew 11:20-30, and we view this passage for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

**II. God's Reactions To The Responses To His Messengers, Matthew 11:20-30.**

- A. Matthew 11:20 begins with the adverb *Tote*, what acts "as a connective particle to introduce a subsequent event" (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 40; Blass and Debrunner, *A Grk. Gram. of the N. T.*, 1973, p. 240).
- B. Thus, what follows in Matthew 11:20-30 is the result of what occurred in Matthew 11:1-19, a passage that recorded the mixed responses of Israel to the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus (as follows):
  - 1. Jesus first condemned those who had not trusted in Him for His great works among them, Matt. 11:20-24:
    - a. Christ began to denounce those cities where most of His miraculous works had been performed because they did not believe in Him in response to those works, Matthew 11:20.
    - b. He condemned Chorazin and Bethsaida along the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, for had the mighty works He had performed in them been done in the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long before in sackcloth and ashes like the people of ancient Nineveh, Matt. 11:21; Jonah 3:4-10.
    - c. Consequently, it would be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for these cities of Israel, for the hearts of the people in Israel were harder than the hearts of these Gentiles, so the people of Israel would receive the greater punishment, Matthew 11:22.
    - d. Jesus in particular singled out Capernaum where He had made his headquarters, for though it was exalted to heaven for being the town of Jesus' ministry headquarters, it would be brought down to hell because its people did not respond to Christ's miracles by believing in Him, Matthew 11:23a. Had Christ's works that were performed in that city been done in wicked Sodom of Abraham's day that God had destroyed by fire and brimstone, it would have remained to the time of Christ, Matthew 11:23b.
    - e. Thus, it would be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for Capernaum, Matthew 11:24.
  - 2. Second, Jesus explained the cause of the unbelief in those who had rejected Him, Matthew 11:25-27:
    - a. The "wise and prudent" (Matt. 11:25a KJV) refer to the Pharisees who considered themselves to be wise and learned students of Scripture who were rightly related to God. However, they had rejected Christ as Messiah and God Incarnate, so God the Father had not revealed the truths about Jesus to the Pharisees, but to people the Pharisees considered spiritual babes, and that because the alleged spiritual babes had trusted in Christ (Matthew 11:25b; J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, 1991, p. 201).
    - b. Jesus complimented God the Father for this selective revelation of the blessings in Christ (Matthew 11:26), adding that no one knew God the Father except the Son of God and those to whom the Son chose to reveal the Father, Matthew 11:27. "It is evident that Jesus would reveal the Father to any who accepted His word," but the Pharisees and many of the unbelieving people did not accept Jesus' word, *Ibid*.
  - 3. Third, and finally, Jesus gave an invitation to His listeners to trust in Him for blessing, Matthew 11:28-30:
    - a. To appreciate Christ's offer of discipleship in these verses, a common expression of that era was that of a "yoke" that signified submission to an occupation or an obligation, *Ibid*.
    - b. Thus, Jesus urged all who labored and were heavily laden with sin or the oppressive legalism of the Pharisees to come unto Him to find rest in the spiritual realm, Matthew 11:28.
    - c. They were called to take Christ's "yoke" upon them, to learn of Him, for in enormous contrast to the proud, oppressive Pharisees, Jesus was meek and lowly in heart, and Jesus' disciples would find rest to their souls opposite the spiritual fatigue they experienced due to the burdens of sin and the legalistic pressures that the Pharisees laid on them, Matthew 11:29-30 with 23:1-4.

***Lesson:*** *God reacted to the mixed responses to the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus by condemning those who refused to believe in Christ, and by wonderfully blessing those who trusted in Him with great blessing and spiritual rest in vast contrast to their sin and guilt and the oppression the Pharisees placed on them.*

***Application:*** *May we trust God's Word to escape His discipline and enjoy His great spiritual rest and blessing.*