

# THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

## The King's Kingdom: A Study of Matthew 8–13

### STUDY ELEVEN

## When Jesus Turned Up the Heat

*Matthew 11:12–26*

*Despite the fact that Jesus had done the work of Messiah and spoken the words of Messiah, the skeptics wanted nothing to do with Him. Jesus put up with them for a while, but now it was time for them to hear the truth straight from His mouth.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**W**ITH patience and grace, Jesus responded to John's question, "Are you the Messiah we've been expecting?" (Matthew 11:3). Jesus' answer left no doubt that He was the One.

*"The blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor." (11:5)*

Yes, Jesus was the Messiah, and His miracles proved it! However, not everyone accepted Jesus' claim, despite the evidence right in front of their eyes.

According to Luke's account, in the crowd were Pharisees and scribes who had brazenly "rejected God's plan for them" (Luke 7:30). Too proud to admit their need for repentance, "they had refused John's baptism" (7:30)—snubbing the Lord's "messenger" who was sent to prepare the way for the Messiah (Malachi 3:1).

Likely these were the same cynics who, earlier, brushed off Jesus by declaring, "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons" (Matthew 9:34 NASB). There was no denying that Jesus could do miracles. But, in their view, He did miracles by the power of Satan, not God. Their refusal to repent plus their disbelief in Jesus as the Son of God set the stage for a climactic showdown with Jesus in Matthew 12 and their final rejection of Christ as their King.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## When Jesus Turned Up the Heat

*Matthew 11:12–26*

While Jesus welcomed doubters like John the Baptizer, He reserved His harshest words for cynics like the Pharisees. In our passage, we'll see Jesus turning up the heat on those who turned up their noses at Him and His generous offer of the kingdom.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

The Pharisees' rejection of Jesus and His kingdom was truly a tragedy. When Jesus confronted them, a deep sadness must have filled His heart, the same ache He feels when we resist His love. But no matter the resistance, Jesus opens His arms to all who will come. Bow to Him in prayer, thanking Him for offering Himself as your King and His kingdom as your eternal home.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

John the Baptizer was in prison and, as only Jesus foreknew, destined for the executioner's blade. Jesus' tribute to John in 11:7–11 had the tone of a eulogy. He grieved for John but even more for the lost opportunity that John's martyrdom represented. Jesus' rebuke in this passage flows like rapids in a mountain river, churning and foaming with emotion.

Read *Matthew 11:12–26* with this context in mind. Look for His *strong words to the aggressive* (Matthew 11:12–19), *serious warnings to the passive* (11:20–24), which culminates in Jesus' *prayer to the Father* (11:25–26).



### Observation: Straight Talk from Jesus

Close observation is key to understanding the meaning of a difficult passage like this one. Look at the words carefully, identifying the main subject, action verbs, comparisons, metaphors, if-then clauses, references to time, and any other features that stand out.<sup>1</sup>

Who were the individuals and groups Jesus mentioned in *Matthew 11:12–15*? What is Jesus' main subject in these verses?



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*Matthew 11:12–26*

Note the time references: “from the time . . . until now” and “before . . . to this present time” (Matthew 11:13). To what periods of time do they refer? What forces did Jesus say are in conflict. What strong words describe that conflict?

The phrase, “this generation” refers to the stiff-necked leaders in Jesus’ day and those who followed them (11:16). How did Jesus describe in *11:16–17* the stubbornness of these people who refused to dance to either of the children’s tunes?

How did Jesus describe the fickleness of these people in *11:18–19* whose opinions swayed from one extreme to another?



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What was the central reason for Jesus denouncing the citizens of Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (*Matthew 11:20–24*)? What similarities and contrasts do you observe in His judgment?

In Jesus' prayer, what "things" had the Father hidden and revealed (*11:25–26*)? What characteristics of the "wise and clever" make them unreceptive to Christ? What characteristics make the "childlike" receptive to Christ?

*Jesus' message of hope and reassurance through the kingdom of heaven was rejected and attacked by the very people Jesus came to reach. We witness the same today.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Interpretation: Active and Passive Resistance to Christ

Since John the Baptizer's arrest, Jesus had been serving the people of Capernaum and surrounding cities, such as Korazin and Bethsaida. He had spread before them the most sumptuous delights of the kingdom of heaven and invited them to satisfy their hungry souls. How did people respond? Did they gratefully accept Jesus' offer and join Him at His feast? Sadly, many did not, and many still reject His offer today.

Jesus' rebuke in our passage displays two general ways that people express their rejection of Christ: aggressive resistance and passive indifference.



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### Aggressive Resistance—Matthew 11:12–19

In Matthew 11:12, Jesus says, “violent people are attacking” the “Kingdom of Heaven.” In his commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–15*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll identifies the violent people as “the wicked leaders among the Jews.”<sup>2</sup> According to [11:14](#), what would have happened if the leaders had submitted to Jesus as their messianic king and accepted His kingdom? For help with the answer, read page 216 in Pastor Chuck’s commentary. Also, read [Malachi 4:1–5](#) for the context of the prophecy Jesus mentioned. What do you discover?

Jesus explained the leaders’ aggressive nature by comparing them to whining children, impossible to please ([Matthew 11:16–17](#)). Their self-righteous taste buds found fault in everything God set before them! They criticized John as a man “possessed by a demon” and Jesus as “a glutton and a drunkard.” Why so belligerent and mean-spirited? According to Pastor Chuck, “They simply didn’t want to believe.”<sup>3</sup>

Can you think of a principle from the Jewish leaders’ deeper, heart issues? What motivates people who aggressively attack Jesus and His followers?



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### Passive Indifference—Matthew 11:20–24

While some directly attacked the Host of God's kingdom, others just walked past the delicious food He had prepared, patting their bellies that they had filled with worldly fare. These were the passive citizens of the three cities Jesus denounced.

Consult your resources or read page 220–221 in Pastor Chuck's commentary to see the locations of the three cities, as well as an explanation of *Matthew 11:20–24*. Based on your research, why do you think Jesus' rebuke was so severe to the people of these cities?

Just across the border of Israel, in Tyre and Sidon, lived masses of people with emaciated souls who would have gladly joined Jesus' feast had it been offered to them. These Gentiles would have repented of their sins and received Jesus' life in His kingdom. While others died from spiritual starvation, Jesus' own people shrugged off the bounty in front of their noses.

Reflect on the heart condition of passive people. What motivates people who are apathetic toward Jesus and life in His kingdom?

*Indifference. Business as usual. The “who-cares?” attitude. Passivity is an enemy.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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### Correlation: Jesus and the Father

When Jesus lifted His eyes to heaven to pray, we get a glimpse into His relationship with the Father. Moving behind the scenes of Israel's rejection of Jesus, the Father was orchestrating His plan of redemption through His Son. Ironically, "those who think themselves wise and clever" in Israel couldn't see the wisdom of heaven in Jesus (Matthew 11:25). But the childlike could!

Paul observed a similar irony:

*God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. (1 Corinthians 1:27–28)*

Why did God turn the tables on the wise and powerful through the cross? Read [1 Corinthians 1:29](#), and write the answer below.

Aren't we glad the Father opened our eyes to the life Jesus offers? *Indeed!* Let's live fully in the spiritual blessing of His kingdom as we await its full consummation when Christ returns.

*God reveals the truth. Unfortunately, we get strong and independent and go our own way. We dare not do that. Trust in the Lord Jesus. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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### Application: Where Are You in All This?

With all their religious training, the Jewish leaders should have recognized Jesus as their Messiah. But they didn't. What lessons can we learn from their mistakes? First, *let's not forget the responsibilities that come with the privilege of knowing Christ.* Second, *let's make use of the opportunities that come with hearing God's truth.*

Is God revealing any responsibilities and opportunities for you? What might they be?

What other lessons have you gleaned from Jesus' rebuke of the proud religious leaders and the passive citizens?





## When Jesus Turned Up the Heat

*Matthew 11:12–26*

As you did in the beginning of our study, close by thanking the Father for offering His Son to you as your King and His kingdom as your eternal inheritance. Join Jesus in His prayer and then add your own words of gratitude to your heavenly Father.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*“O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike” (Matthew 11:25).*

### ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, *“How to Study the Bible for Yourself.”*
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 1–15*, vol. 1A (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 215.
3. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 1–15*, 216.

